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ONE BASS GUITAR MA

Bass Guitar Magazine

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JON THORNE

CORT

GUY PRATT

"IT FEELS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE"

KINGS of LEON

JARED FOLLOWILL TALKS STADIUM-SIZED BASS

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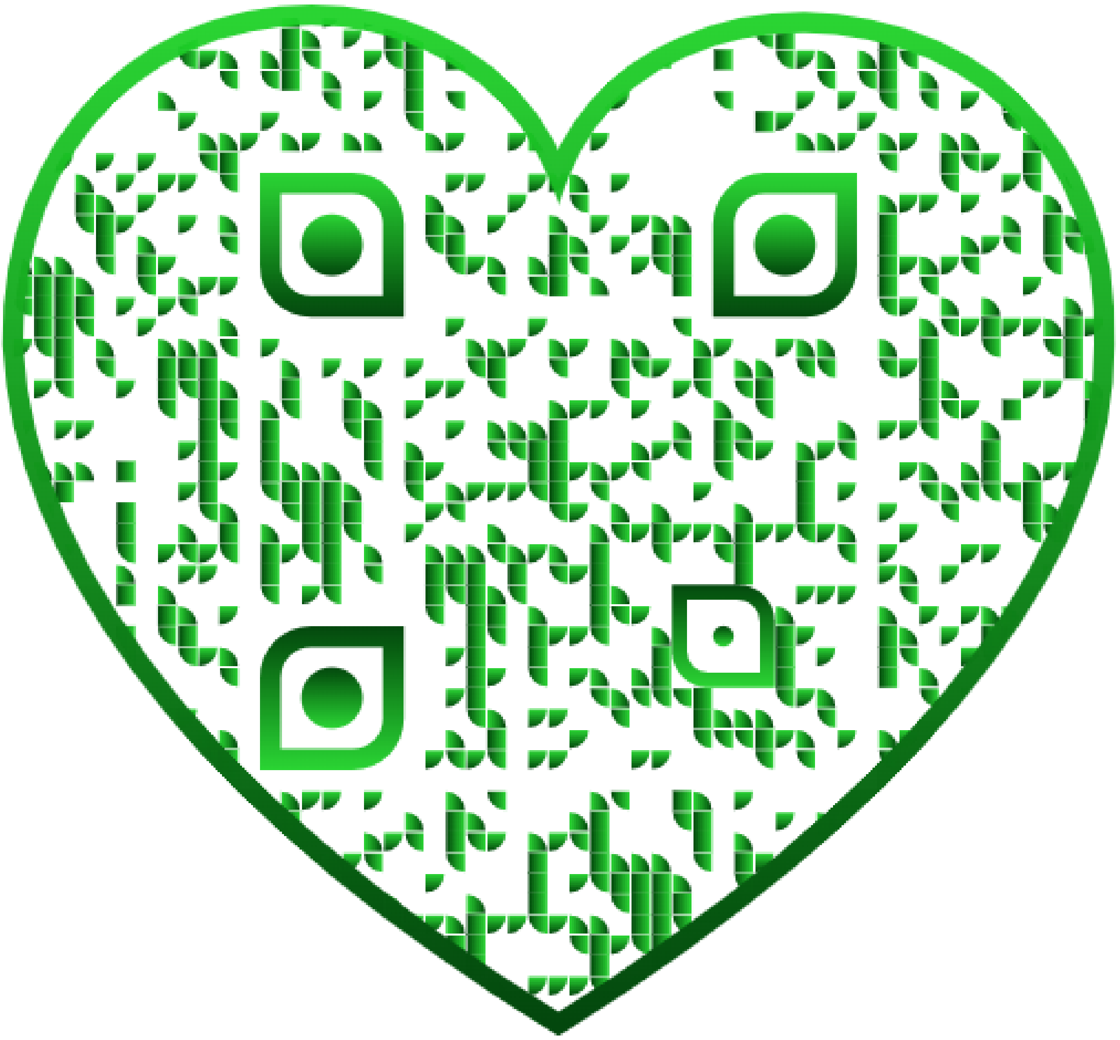

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***Bass Guitar Magazine* is proud to support the Music Industries Association.**

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We love funk. We love jazz. We love soul. But here at *BGM's* secret command bunker, we also love to rock out, and when it comes to stadium-sized tunes that cause thousands – maybe hundreds of thousands – of people to jump around like they're possessed, you don't get bigger than Kings Of Leon, whose bassist Jared Followill graces our cover this month. His tale will blow your mind, from his roots as a teenager who'd never picked up a bass to the Kings' overnight transformation into bona fide stars all the way to today's stellar position at the very top of the global music industry. Organising Jared's interview and shoot required the efforts of an international team of bass folk, and so it's a big hats off to interviewer Jon D'Auria and photographer Kevin Estrada for heading up our Stateside bass team. You will not be disappointed.

Elsewhere in this month's *BGM* we interview four of Britain's finest bassists – Mark King, Glenn Hughes, Guy Pratt and Jon Thorne – before focusing overseas again with a chat with Kip Winger and a tour around Cort's massive factory in Indonesia, which makes an eyeball-swivelling 600,000 guitars a year. Head to our gear section for reviews of super-expensive basses by Rikkers and Dingwall, more moderately-priced models by Caparison and low-to-budget-specced Fender amps, making our coverage tailor-made for everyone's budget. The same principle applies to our tuition pages, divided as ever into Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced and further subdivided in each case into Theory and Technique. We really do want to make you a better bassist, no matter what your starting-point. What are you waiting for? See you next month, rockers.

Joel McIver, editor

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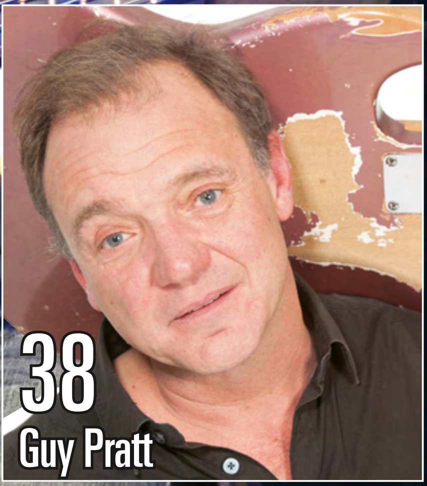

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THE LOW DOWN

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE BASS WORLD, BROUGHT TO YOU BY BGM'S TEAM OF FEARLESS NEWSHOUNDS

FACING THE MUSIC

British amp-makers Barefaced Audio have announced a new range of updated products, specifically the Big Baby II and Big Twin II. In their own words: "The 800w Big Baby II is potent enough to punch and thunder through any loud rock gig, yet being only 12kg, this 1x12" cab is also incredibly small and light. It has been designed to handle anything you can try to throw at it without breaking your back and still fitting in your car.

The 2x12" 1600w Big Twin II has also been updated. Through a redeveloped internal bracing design it is now stronger and at around 22kg, even lighter than before." Barefaced designs and manufactures in house, and to keep prices down sell direct from their factory in the UK. They ship internationally with customers across Europe, North America and Australasia. Prices for the new Big Series models start at £699.

Info: www.barefacedaudio.com

GUESS WHO

It's 14 years since Who bassist John Entwistle's untimely death, and singer Roger Daltrey recently talked about his performance on the classic 'My Generation', a song whose bass solo no doubt causes you as much grief as it does us whenever you try and play it. "The bass had never been played that way until John Entwistle arrived on the scene," said Daltrey, accurately. "The bass had always been played '*doop, doop doop, duh-doop*'. Before John, that was a bass player. After John, everything changed. He was a pioneer, a mystical player. 'My Generation', the solo on that one, when people first heard it, [they asked] 'How can you have a lead bass player?' But it worked. He had the talent to carry that all the way through. He was a true artist, a true musician." Daltrey and fellow Who member Pete Townshend also recently announced a 2014-15 world tour and a DVD release of the band's recent *Quadrophenia* shows. Rumours abound of the band's first new studio album since 2006, although who's going to play bass, we want to know...

KING ALBERT

Italy's Alusonic Aluminium Instruments has announced the release of the Alberto Rigoni Hybrid signature bass, the brainchild of the eponymous *BGM* alumnus.

"Like many bass players, I'm affected by GAS (Gear Acquisition Syndrome) but I'm also pretty eclectic," says the great man. "I'm always looking for innovative and exciting instruments. Based on a new concept, my new Alusonic Hybrid signature bass features an alder body which gives a punchy and full mid-tone, and an aircraft grade aluminium top that increases the attack of the notes and gives them an incredible clarity. It's the best bass I've ever had in terms of tone and design. Thanks Alusonic!"

Info: www.alusonic.com

ENTER SAND MEN

German bass company Sandberg has sent us a couple of bits of exciting news. First off, there's a tasty new budget bass called the Electra M4, equipped with a humbucker designed for modern rock sounds. The neck and body of the M4, as with all Electra models, are produced in Korea and then assembled in Sandberg's workshop in Braunschweig, Germany. Secondly, none other than 3rd Eye Girl bassist Ida Kristine Nielsen, a Danish funk maestro who also goes by the stage names Ida Funkhouser and BassIda, has a new signature Sandberg out. Her band recently shot to fame as the backing group for an up-and-coming pop singer from Minneapolis called Prince, hence her rather droolworthy new California VT4. With an alder body, maple neck with block inlays and matched headstock, a cream high-gloss finish, Sandberg's new hum-free Black Label pickups, a thumb rest made of ebony, a Hipshot D-tuner, gold hardware and a white peace symbol on the pickguard, Ida's VT4 is available now.

Info: www.sandberg-guitars.de

Triumvirate

We select three essential albums from a genre or player.
THIS MONTH: Mel Schacher

1 GRAND FUNK BY GRAND FUNK RAILROAD

Throughout the 70s Grand Funk Railroad were an American institution, one that enjoyed massive success with the public while failing to garner praise from critics of the era. As a power trio the band gave plenty of space for Mel Schacher's grooving and growly bass, and their second album is home to plenty of awesome bass-lines. The slinky melodic line of 'Paranoid' is the standout, with its funky hammer-ons. Elsewhere you can marvel at Mel's driving riffage on 'Mr. Limousine Driver', 'Got This Thing On The Move' and 'Please Don't Worry'.

2 CLOSER TO HOME BY GRAND FUNK RAILROAD

Bands back then had a real studio work ethic. This was the band's third studio album, released less than 12 months after their debut, 1969's *On Time*.

Schacher is on fine form again. Check out the awesome, rolling pentatonic riff on album opener 'Sin's A Good Man's Brother' and the rapid, descending line on 'Nothing Is The Same'. Schacher has an incredible talent for nailing the groove while filling the melodic space left by the guitar and nowhere is this more obvious than on 'I'm Your Captain (Closer To Home)'.

3 E PLURIBUS FUNK BY GRAND FUNK RAILROAD

The pulsing root-fifth line on 'Footstompin' Music'. The huge distorted tone on 'People Let's Stop The War' with its driving riff and pentatonic runs. The rapid, funky sixteenth note line on 'Upsetter'. In the space of three short songs, Schacher gives a shining example of just how powerful and creative rock bass can be in a power trio format. The rest of the album is just as awesome, with incessantly upbeat bass-lines that have served as inspiration for funk-rock bassists the world over.

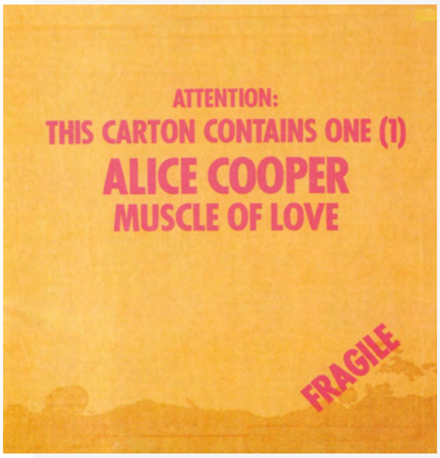
Revolver

Every month we tell you the bass-line we can't stop listening to

THIS MONTH:
'Muscle of love'

Bassist: *Dennis Dunaway*
Album: *Muscle Of Love by Alice Cooper*

Although this turned out to be the last album by the original line-up of seminal rockers Alice Cooper, and one that received a mixed reception at the time, it's still rammed full of classic, growling bass-lines by Dennis Dunaway. The title track is no exception, with the verse powered by long, greasy slides and the chorus featuring melodic pentatonic fills that fit perfectly around the drums and vocal. Dunaway powers the solo section along with a galloping groove that's pure proto-heavy metal. Why can't modern rock bass be so exciting?



MIKED UP

Slappin', poppin' bassist Mike Zabrin, who appeared in BGM last year, is back with a new album. He describes Funktastic as "an intoxicating concoction of contemporary R&B and jazz, with a heavy dose of funk, and a slice of hip-hop. Funktastic takes the listener on a musical journey of rhythmic grooves and soulful lyrics. Its unique spotlight on electric bass and appearances by members of Kool & The Gang, Parliament/ Funkadelic, Yo Mama's Big Fat Booty Band and Fishbone make it a must-have for every bassist's collection." With special guests like that, what's not to like?

Info: www.mikezabrinmusic.com

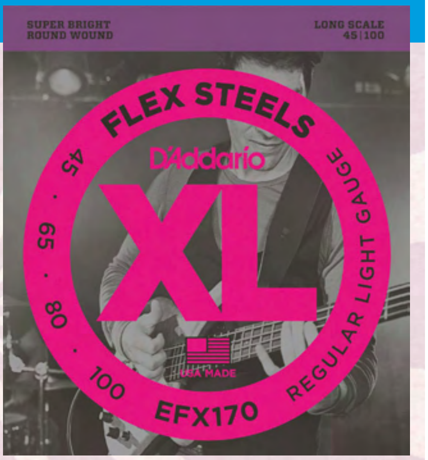
WIN!

Thanks to D'Addario we've got three sets of Flex Steels strings to give away to the clever person who gets this right:

Which of these bassists does not endorse D'Addario?

A Victor Wooten
B Derek Smalls
C Alphonso Johnson

Head to www.bassguitarmagazine.com/ competition.html to enter, or write to BGM Competition, Lawrence House, Morrell Street, Leamington Spa, CV32 5SZ.
Closing date: 15 July.



The winner of three ace bass books is Andy Barnes. Thanks to all who entered.

WON!

Hanby's Handy Hints

Send your gear-related queries to Chris Hanby at chris.hanby@me.com and he'll answer them here!

Hi Chris, I'm looking for a reverb pedal. I've posted online asking for advice, but it seems that reverb pedals are not too popular so I've received very little comment. Some guys have said that reverb is not effective in the mix. I've looked at various YouTube reviews and it appears that only the EBS Dynaverb has been specifically designed for bass. This pedal is popular with some forum bassers and I like what I heard on YouTube. Phil at Guitar FX Direct suggested the Mr Black Supermoon when I suggested the Deluxe Plus. I've also looked at Wampler and TC Electronic. The band I play in do mainly 60s covers and we're all of pensionable age. We all met at college in the late 60s and think we're rockers, but codgers is probably closer to the mark! What do you think?
Mike Watts, Hants

Chris says: Hi Mike, and thanks for your question. Reverb is an acquired taste for bass guitar, but one that can be very effective. I suspect that the lack of information and video demos is because most bassists prefer to keep an uncoloured tone to underpin the band. I have, however, heard reverb used to great effect with solo bass. It adds a degree of air that can really make the bass sing. The first thing about time-based effects such as delay and reverb is that they don't have to be bass-specific. Reverb is simply the sound repeated very quickly, creating an echo. Everything from Boss to Boutique will work fine. As you are in a band playing 60s covers, I suspect you won't need reverb all that often. If your band is going to delve a little further back to 50s material, when most recordings were awash with slapback echo, then it'll come in very handy. The pedals you mention are all well worth trying, depending on the range and flexibility of options you require. EBS pedals do play nicely together, so as you already have the MultiComp and UniChorus, the Dynaverb might be a good place to start. Remember, the best way to find what you are after is to try out as many as possible.

Pic byShigeru Uchiyam

VINYL SOLUTIONS

In April, the international Record Store Day event was accompanied by the release by the Omnivore label of *Modern American Music… Period!*, an 11-track collection of mostly unheard songs recorded by the late Jaco Pastorius. Recorded at Miami's Criteria Studios in 1976, as the then-22-year-old Jaco was preparing for his debut album, the songs on the album were gathered and released by the Pastorius estate in conjunction with Metallica bassist Robert Trujillo, who is also co-producing a forthcoming Pastorius documentary, simply titled *Jaco* and directed by Stephen Kijak and Paul Marchand. The film will feature commentary by bassists as esteemed as Sting and Flea as well as Trujillo himself, who said: "Omnivore's release of Jaco Pastorius's *Criteria Sessions* is a raw, unique statement – a statement that lets you know you are experiencing a powerful historical musical moment. Jaco's sound, and facility alone, takes you on a trip that is totally new and fresh! This is punk at its best, and the attitude and edge is pure."

EVERY MONTH MASTER AXE RESTORER SIMON MCVEIGH WORKS ON BRINGING A KNACKERED OLD STATUS BACK TO LIFE. MONTH FOUR: FINISHING THE BEAST!

Simon McVeigh has been a session bassist for over 20 years, and works as a bass tutor at the Royal County School of Music in County Meath, Ireland. He has recorded with many artists and runs www.breadheadmusic.com, a contacts resource for professionals in the music industry.

I've decided not to take the frets off my Status after all, as it sounds so good as it is. I don't want to jeopardise that sound, so I've erred on the side of caution and am leaving it alone. (In other words, I've chickened out!) Anyway, I've reconnected everything and executed a pretty good set-up. The last little job I did was to replace the battery compartment, which was totally knackered. That was a quick, cheap fix that anyone can tackle, and it really freshens up the look of the bass.

As I've said before, if you're unsure about doing a set-up yourself, then take it to a professional to do it for you. It won't cost the earth and it will make the world of difference to your instrument. Learning to do a set-up yourself is worthwhile, however, as nobody will set it up exactly the way you want it – only you can do that.

I've just put a fresh set of strings on and plugged it in, and this unassuming little guitar has put a big smile on my face. I'm playing it in passive mode, and it punches well above its price tag. I can't claim much credit for its sound, as most of the changes I made were cosmetic, but I do think that my new bridge design goes part of the way towards making this little gem sound so fantastic.

I don't know whether it's luck or skill when I'm looking for bass projects, but I've managed to find some great instruments. My budget dictates what I can and can't buy, and this has led me to some rough diamonds at budget prices. These require a bit of a gamble, but most have really paid off, in the satisfaction stakes at least, even if they weren't always financially rewarding! I've had my fair share of absolute lemons which ended up being real money pits, but that's the breaks. Conversely, my spending was minimal on this bass but I achieved a dramatic outcome.

I would gladly take this Status to a club gig, as I wouldn't be constantly looking over my shoulder to make sure it hadn't been nicked. You also wouldn't be too precious about it if one of your bandmates knocked it over. At the same time, you wouldn't be compromising any of your sound – and you certainly wouldn't feel as if you were bringing your second-best bass to the gig.

I'm really pleased with the overall look of this bass. My new hardware has given it a fresh look with sleek lines. The wax finish has given it a slightly aged look that contrasts with the new shiny bits, but somehow it all works. Next month I'm setting myself my biggest challenge yet – I'm going to build a bass from scratch using second-hand parts, everything from the bare carcass up. Will I end up with a total Frankenstein's monster of an instrument? Just wait 'til you see which bass it is...

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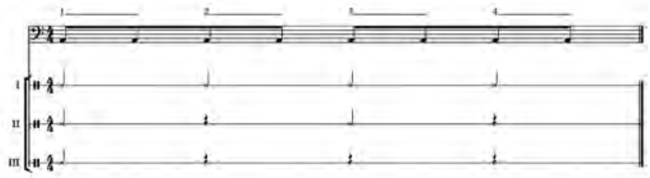
THE BASS SCHOLARSHIP

Rares Diaconu sees light at the end of the tunnel...

I'm almost halfway through my last term at the Institute; I can't believe how quickly the weeks have passed! Things are getting trickier every week, and all of us have some practising to do to keep up with them.

This month we are moving away from the technical/theoretical side of bass playing and entering the more feel-oriented field of timekeeping. In a band situation, the drummer is the one who usually gets blamed if a song's time is unsettled, but in fact all of the musicians in the band are responsible for it. By training our internal clock, we can make sure we feel the pulse in any situation, whether our rhythm section partner is a drummer with strong or bad timing, or if we're playing on our own. Last week we were introduced to a simple exercise to improve our timekeeping, as a lot of us were struggling with timing in a certain song.

The idea is to choose a note – let's say A on the E string – and play eighth notes with a metronome or drum machine. Start with a slow tempo (say 60-70BPM) and make the click hit on every beat of the bar. Try locking in with the pulse and playing the notes as evenly and smoothly as possible. Because the metronome clicks on every beat of the bar, keeping in time should not be a problem. However, if you start removing beats from the metronome, timing issues may appear. Halve the beat so it only clicks on one and three. Now you are responsible for playing two and four in time.



Just as you did before, try feeling the pulse and playing the eighth notes in time on every beat. After you feel comfortable with that, the next step would be cutting beat three out of the bar as well, so as you only get beat one from the metronome. This way you are playing a whole bar with just the initial pulse coming from the click. You can take the exercise even further and have the metronome give you one beat for two bars, but make sure you're comfortable with the ones above first.

This is a really useful exercise for your timing – I hope you'll have fun with it. Until next month...

BASSICALLY SPEAKING

BASSISTS REVEAL THE TRICKS OF THEIR TRADE FASTER THAN A SNAPPING D STRING

GEAR

BASSES Music Man StingRay 5 HH, Bongo 5, Bongo 6 HH
EFFECTS Darkglass B3K Overdrive
AMPS Avalon U5, Tech21 SansAmp RBI, Darkglass B7K

ROB VAN DER LOO EPICA

I play a lot of music in B tuning where I actually use the higher strings, so I mostly go for five-strings to avoid switching instruments on stage all the time. I don't care how many strings my bass has, I don't care if I have to play it with my fingers, with a pick or if I have to hit it with a sausage to get the right tone. To me it's all about functionality. My first bass was a crappy Westone heavy metal bass. I don't know the exact model but it's damn ugly. My favourite bass ever to date is probably my acoustic Tacoma Thunderbird. One of my biggest compliments to date was when I came off stage and I suddenly felt this hand on my shoulder. This crunchy English voice said 'Hey man, I love your tone!' It was Lemmy from Motörhead. We ended up hanging out, being bass nerds, he playing my five-string and me holding his famous 'Rickenbastard'. Our new album, *The Quantum Enigma*, is out now, followed by an intensive world tour.

www.epica.nl

BEN ELLIS THE FRUITFUL EARTH

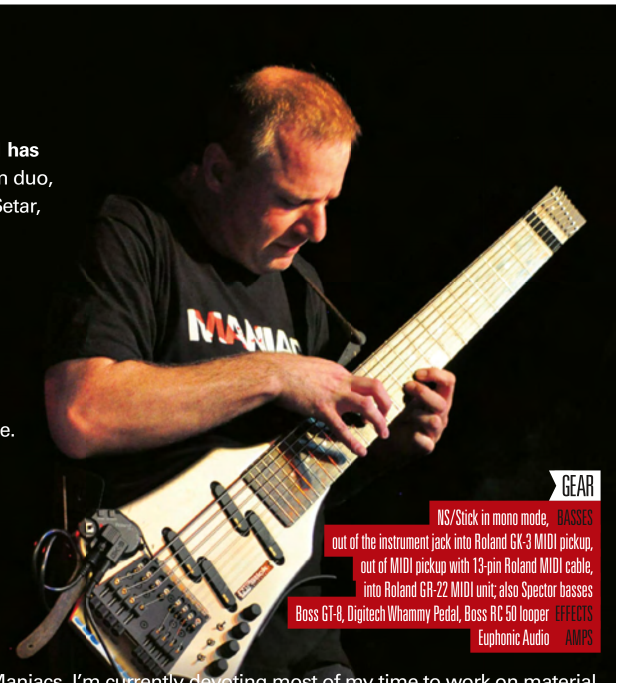
I don't really have a specific approach to bass playing as I play with lots of different musicians, but I try to keep my playing cool, simple and pop conscious. I'm more of a melodic and texture-oriented player than a technician. It can sometimes take a lot of thought to find the thing that works best for the song, even if it sounds very simple. Sonically, I like the bass warm and valve-driven. I like character. If I could meld Tom Waits' growl with the endlessly ringing hotel bell in *Barton Fink*, I'd be pretty happy with that bass sound. I have always been a four-string player. For me that's what a bass is and I've never had a problem filling the available sonic landscape like that, but use as many strings as you need to do the job. When I grew up in the 80s there was an awful lot of 'stunt' bass playing which involved a lot of very hairy men with very little feel, playing frighteningly technical slap bass

> "IF I COULD MELD TOM WAITS' GROWL WITH THE ENDLESSLY RINGING HOTEL BELL IN BARTON FINK, I'D BE PRETTY HAPPY WITH THAT BASS SOUND"

just because they could. It kind of put me off. I didn't come to the joyous union of proper funk drumming and loose and lovely slap playing until much later, so for me it's not something that comes very naturally. There is no real secret to playing bass well. Listen, don't overplay and never underestimate how much louder loud is when you start quiet. The playing of John Entwistle, James Jamerson and JJ Burnel still gives me much inspiration. My first bass was the bottom four strings of a cheap nylon strung guitar. When recording the Fruitful Earth album with Andy Jones at Albury Court Studios, I used a 60s Fender Precision through a 70s Fender Bassman 100 with the original cab. He used a phase-inverted NS10 and an RE20 along with a DI from the bass itself. It sounded lovely and very natural. He's a big fan of northern soul and Motown, so we were on the same page from the get-go. It's not always necessary or desirable to make the bass really speak out to play a great bass-line. Quite often repetition and groove are enough, but I think it is important to realise that when the bass does speak it can command great gravitas, especially if we choose our moments wisely.

www.thefruitfulearth.com

GARY JIBILIAN
JIBILIAN/SETAR



My main project since 2001 has been my NS/Stick and drum duo, currently billed as Jibilian/Setar, with Jay Setar on drums. I've been a working bassist for many years in Detroit, as well as in LA. My first 'real' original band was Present Absence in the early 90s, focusing on the technical thrash metal genre. In LA, I've been fortunate to work with a wide array of genres, from thrashing out on the NS/Stick with the band Reason to playing with electric violinist Patrick Marsh, to rocking out on covers and originals with Funkin Maniacs. I'm currently devoting most of my time to work on material to teach for the upcoming Free Hands Stick Academy on 14-16 August, as well as new music for Jibilian/Setar. I've also been working as a luthier at Stick Enterprises, building the Stick and NS/Stick. I write my best riffs when I'm home, watching a hockey game with the TV volume off. Sometimes, when I'm walking to the bathroom, out of nowhere, I get a riff in my head that hits me like a ton of bricks. I start singing the riff and don't stop till I get back to my axe, then begin to write my next masterpiece. Non-musical events inspire my writing as well, like a drive through a twisty road, grilling a steak at midnight, and the rising cost of dental floss (really pisses me off!). I first played an electric bass at 17. I began playing metal, then discovered blues and R&B, and started working in numerous bands in Detroit. After 12 years of the same old tunes, and being inspired by bands like King Crimson and Cynic, I was determined to get a Stick. In January 2000, I checked out the Stick site, and saw a picture of their new model, the eight-string NS/Stick, which can be played like a traditional bass as well as with the tap-style technique. I put in my order, received my NS later that year and fell in love with it!
www.garyjibilian.com

GEAR
NS/Stick in mono mode, out of the instrument jack into Roland GK-3 MIDI pickup, out of MIDI pickup with 13-pin Roland MIDI cable, into Roland GR-22 MIDI unit; also Spector basses BASSES
Boss GT-8, Digitech Whammy Pedal, Boss RC 50 looper EFFECTS
Euphonic Audio AMPS

GEAR
BASSES Gibson Thunderbird
EFFECTS None
AMPS Marshall VBA 400 head, Marshall VBC810 cabinet, Fender Bassman head, Fender 2x15 cabinet

TOBIAS EXXEL EDGUY

I would describe my bass style as powerful, fast and loud! And I'm not talking about turning the volume knob to 11, but hitting my strings very hard and fiercely. My Gibson Thunderbird is perfectly made for this kind of sound and I usually don't break more than two or three strings on a whole tour! I do not play five-string bass, because I simply never thought about it. We play mostly in D, but sometimes I use drop C. I really love that sound of the 105 E string with very low tension: it sounds much more heavy and dangerous than a 125. There's only one five-string, which is an ESH Various fretless, which I used to play partly in our songs 'The Pharaoh' and 'Thorn Without A Rose'. I love to play the fretless bass very much with the band, and also at home, practising just for fun. Have you ever played Metallica's 'Battery' on a fretless? The secret of playing bass well is to play 'bass' and not 'bass guitar'. I used to say this when I heard bass players who evidently would rather prefer to play the guitar. I prefer to concentrate on the rhythm, play tight with the drums and produce pressure and drive with the deep frequencies in your stomach. I'm not someone who likes discussing equipment, what I have or don't have or what I would like to have, expensive or cheap, because in the end your sound and tone comes entirely from your mind and your fingers. That's my philosophy. Our new album *Space Police – Defenders Of The Crown* is out now. I am very proud of this album, because it's much heavier than the previous ones. I'm looking forward to playing in the UK in September.
www.edguy.net

© Aga Krysiuk

GEAR
Blakhart basses, Ernie Ball strings BASSES
Sansamp Bass Driver DI, Sansamp RBI, Boss Bass Overdrive EFFECTS
Ampeg SVT-4 Pro AMPS

TOMASZ 'HAL' HALICKI VADER

Four strings are quite enough for me so far. They are enough for so many awesome players, so why shouldn't they be enough for me? I want to play five-string bass in the future, though. I know that many of our riffs would sound heavier if played lower. I don't use the slap style – it doesn't fit to the style I play with my bands. I know some exercises with slapping and sometimes I practise them at home, but I don't need it when I perform. The secret of playing bass well is to understand the role of bass in the band you're playing with, then do it best, and always listen to the drummer's playing. My bass heroes are Cliff Burton, Geezer Butler, Peter Baltes, Peter Steele, John Deacon and many more. I was always a big Cliff Burton fan and I think that he'd have created a lot of great stuff if that accident in Sweden had never happened. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose that magic sound from old hard rock albums, like the first Black Sabbath record. Our new album, *Tibi Et Igni*, is out now.
www.vader.pl

GEAR

BASSES Ibanez Jetking prototypes, Rickenbacker 4001
EFFECTS Sansamp
AMPS Peavey VB-2, Ampeg SVT-2

JONAS KANGUR DEATHSTARS

I would describe my bass style as a necessary evil. If you don't have the bottom, the top won't balance. I rough up the strings pretty hard with my pick, which gives my sound a good attack. It's not technically the most complicated playing, but since we use backtracks it's important to be tight as shadow at night. I do not play five- or six-string bass, because I barely use more than three strings. If I wanted five strings I would have brought my banjo. The secret of playing bass well is to practise a lot, but to be fair it's just more fun doing a lot of live shows. My first bass was a Rocky Precision copy. It was tragically terminated by a friend of mine. My favourite bass ever to date is my black Rickenbacker 4001 from 1977. Unfortunately I've lost some of the mechanics and it is hard to come by spare parts. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose *A Nod Is As Good As A Wink… To A Blind Horse* by the Faces. I love both the sound and style of playing on 'Stay With Me'. Our fourth album *The Perfect Cult* is out in June and our European tour 'Claws Through Europe' kicks off in September, followed by the rest of the world.

www.deathstars.net

© Kristen Lee

GEAR

BASSES Conklin Groove Tools five-string
EFFECTS Boss HM2, Boss DS1, Boss Bass Overdrive, Boss TU2, Electro-Harmonix Microsynth, Electro-Harmonix Metal Muff, Electro-Harmonix Freeze, Electro-Harmonix Chorus, EBS OctaBass, EBS Bass Compressor, Ernie Ball volume pedal, Morley A/B
AMPS SWR 700pro-Basson 810, Ampeg 810, Sunn Beta Lead-Sunn 215B, Carvin 215

DAMON JAMES KELLY STONEBURNER

I would describe my bass style as a pod of space whales battling a pack of velociraptors with Gene Simmons' makeup through a wormhole onto the Annunaki's home planet near the Sirius star. I play four-strings when I wanna shred, I play five-strings when I need to make people defecate themselves. If I had a six-string I'd figure out how to abuse that as well. I don't slap because that is rude. Real men punch, no sissy open-handed attacks from this dude. I square up like a real man and use closed fists. The secret of playing bass well is not caring what other people think conventional is. The true innovators of our art didn't think about the limits of what you could do with a bass. The true artist broke every rule with two hands and made everyone jealous while being a badass. My first bass was an Ariopar four-string; my godmother got it for me when I was 10. My friends were starting a band and they were all like 'Hey, you're fat… you should play the bass!' My bass heroes are Cliff Burton, Gene Simmons, Lemmy Kilmister and John Paul Jones. Every time you pick up your bass, realise that every note has been played and that no matter what you do everything has been done already. Then drop acid and forget that bullshit. Plug your bass in and channel extraterrestrials through your rig. Our newest album, *Life Drawing*, is out now on Neurot Records.

stoneburner.bandcamp.com

POLLY O'KEARY POLLY O'KEARY & THE RHYTHM METHOD

I play a five-string because I have smaller hands than most bass players. A five-string gives me more root note options closer to my body on smaller frets. It also gives me more options for playing walking bass, which I love, and I get a greater range of tones using different positions on the neck. I slap because if I don't, I'll never actually get any good at it. The secret of playing bass well is not playing too much. My favourite bass ever is the one I play today. I love Pedulla because the necks are ergonomically perfect for me: very wide, with a 19mm span between strings at the bridge, but also very slim. I love the sound, the wood (zebra), the neck-thru construction, the double truss rod which makes it easy to set up my own bass, the Bartolini soapbars, the Thunderguts switch for that quick presence boost, even the gold hardware. My bass heroes are Johnny B. Gayden, who played a lot for Johnny Winter and Albert Collins, Tommy Shannon of Double Trouble, Christopher Thomas of The Soul Of John Black, who is an absolute architect of bass line structure, and Tal Wilkenfeld. My band just released our album *Compass*, and we are currently watching it get lots of radio play in cool places like Dublin and even Tasmania.

www.pollyokeary.com

BASSES Pedulla Thunderbass ET5
AMPS Genz Benz Shuttle Max 12.0 head, Ampeg 4x10 cabinet

GEAR

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THE BISCUIT'$ BA$$ BU$INE$$

THIS MONTH, BASS TUTOR AND SESSION REGULAR GARY 'BISCUIT' BENNETT DISCUSSES WHAT IT TAKES TO BECOME ESTABLISHED AS A PROFESSIONAL BASS PLAYER

Welcome back to Biscuit's Bass Business! This month I'll be looking at how to go about setting yourself up as a professional musician: what does it take to become a professional bass player, and just how do you go about establishing yourself, and earn a living as a working musician?

Let's assume that you have learned hundreds of songs, polished up your chops and fingering positions on the fretboard, and gained a good grasp of music notation and knowledge of bass tablature. You feel confident that you have progressed to a standard that you would deem to be an acceptable level to go professional, and you feel ready to use your instrument as a tool for gaining work out there in the music jungle. Great, let's move forward.

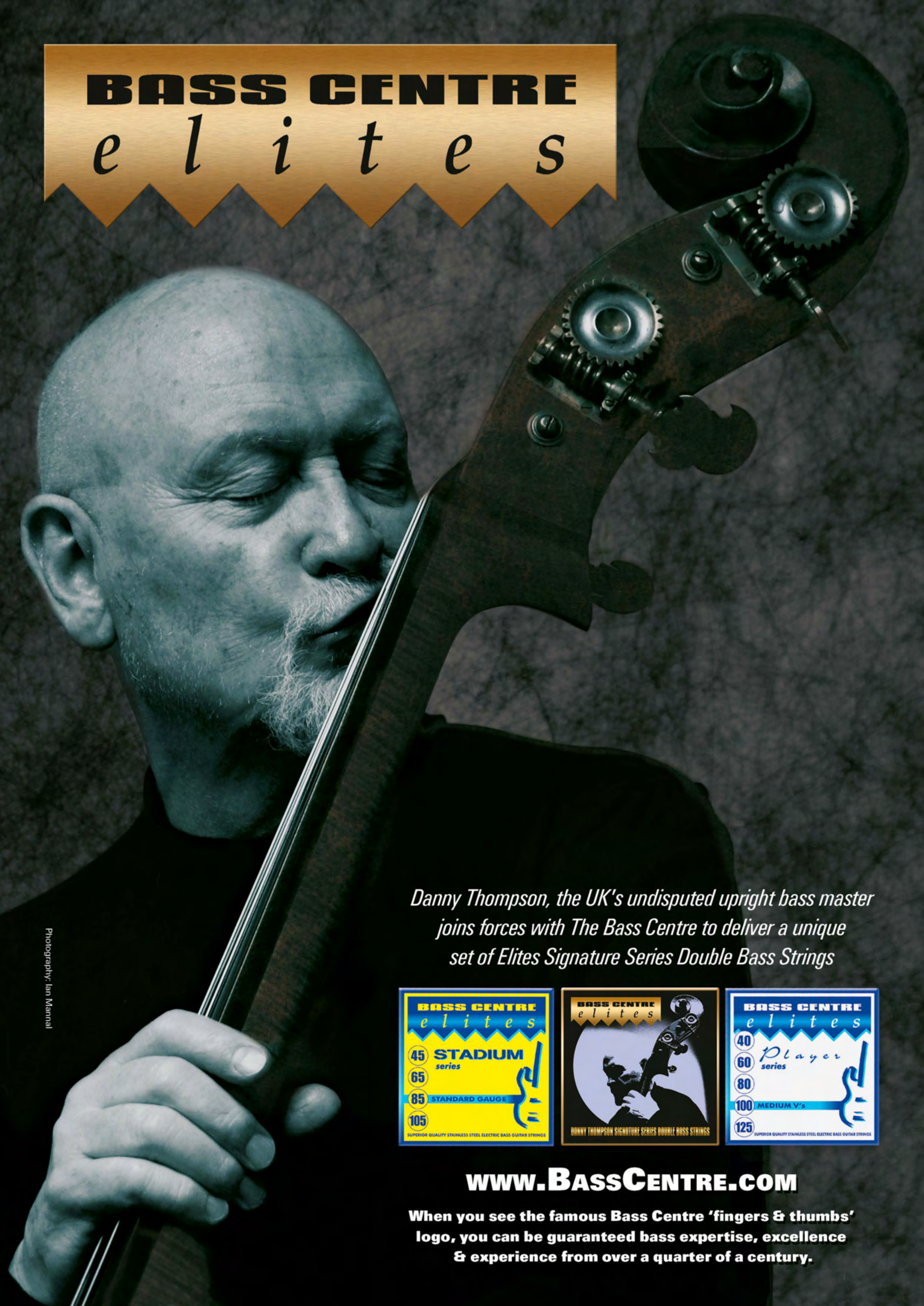
The first thing you should do is check 'bass player wanted' adverts with a view to gaining employment within a band or project. This is certainly achievable, and not the most difficult exercise in the world, but remember that you are aiming at turning your talents into a business, and so the figures you're offered have to add up to making you a profit.

> "THIS IS ABOUT MAKING A LIVING, NOT SIMPLY HAVING A LAUGH. YOU WILL HAVE TO FINE-TUNE YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS, BECOME EXCELLENT AT JUGGLING A DIARY AND BE PRETTY HANDY WITH A CALCULATOR"

Without exception, I recommend that you adopt a totally professional approach from the outset. This is about making a living, not simply having a laugh. You will have to fine-tune your communication skills, become excellent at juggling a diary and be pretty handy with a calculator. Focus on thorough preparation and retaining a clear head during all conversations and correspondence with any current and possible future business associates. Always be polite and confident – although never arrogant – when arranging a meeting, audition or session. Always be on time for any appointment, allowing for any possible hold-ups that may occur on your journey: being late is the worst possible start to any session. Before setting out, make sure that you have sufficient spares and tools with you, including a tuner, spare strings, batteries, extension lead, picks, Allen keys and a spare cable or two, all of which you will have checked on the morning of your appointment. Your bass, amp and cabs should obviously be in full working order before you pack them for your trip.

In my next column, among other things, I will be moving into the all-important issue of finance. I'll be guiding you through the current going rates for the various musical avenues that you may wish to explore. Until then, get that gear checked!

Gary 'Biscuit' Bennett is a freelance bass guitarist and tutor, covering Essex, London and the south-east, with many years of experience in the music industry under his belt. His CV includes hundreds of live performances and many domestic and international recording sessions. Awarded the title of Hartke's 'Best Unsigned Bass Player Worldwide 2008', Biscuit is currently an endorsing artist for Hartke, D'Addario, Planet Waves, Boss, Essential Sound Products and Hypnotic. Contact: @biscuitisation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THE MU PAGE

MUSICIANS' UNION SESSIONS OFFICIAL PETE THOMS PONDERS THE ART OF SELF-PROMOTION

With graduates pouring out of music colleges each year and the competition becoming ever stiffer, it is easy to feel despondent at the chances of being considered, let alone hired, for paid employment as a session musician or singer. Yet there are a multitude of jobs on offer – not just in studio sessions for pop bands, big bands and orchestras, but also for film scores, adverts, corporate events, cruise ship slots and musicals.

A polished promotional package will help you stand out from the crowd. This should present a concise view of what you and your music are all about. With the right CV, photographs and audio and video clip links, you will provide potential employers with the overall flavour of your musical talent and experience.

A CV is a snapshot of your musical career to date. Begin by stating your main instrument, then any other instruments you play, and the genres in which you specialise. Next, compile a list of your best gigs and achievements. This need not be chronological: you may want to highlight the most impressive gigs first. Keep information to the point, making it easy for potential employers to assess at a glance.

If you're after mainly live session work, do make this clear. If, however, you are seeking recording session work, it is important to flag up any studio experience you have and the people you have worked with.

"People recognise that with a musician who is an efficient live player, you can put them in a recording studio and turn the red light on, and they sometimes go to pieces," says MU sessions official Pete Thoms. "The employer needs to have the confidence that you've been in a studio before, that you've played with other people and, ideally, that the product of those recordings has been released. There's nothing more telling than being able to say, 'I played on that record that you've heard on the radio'. That's

> "PEOPLE RECOGNISE THAT WITH A MUSICIAN WHO IS AN EFFICIENT LIVE PLAYER, YOU CAN PUT THEM IN A RECORDING STUDIO AND TURN THE RED LIGHT ON, AND THEY SOMETIMES GO TO PIECES"

A cruise ship, yesterday

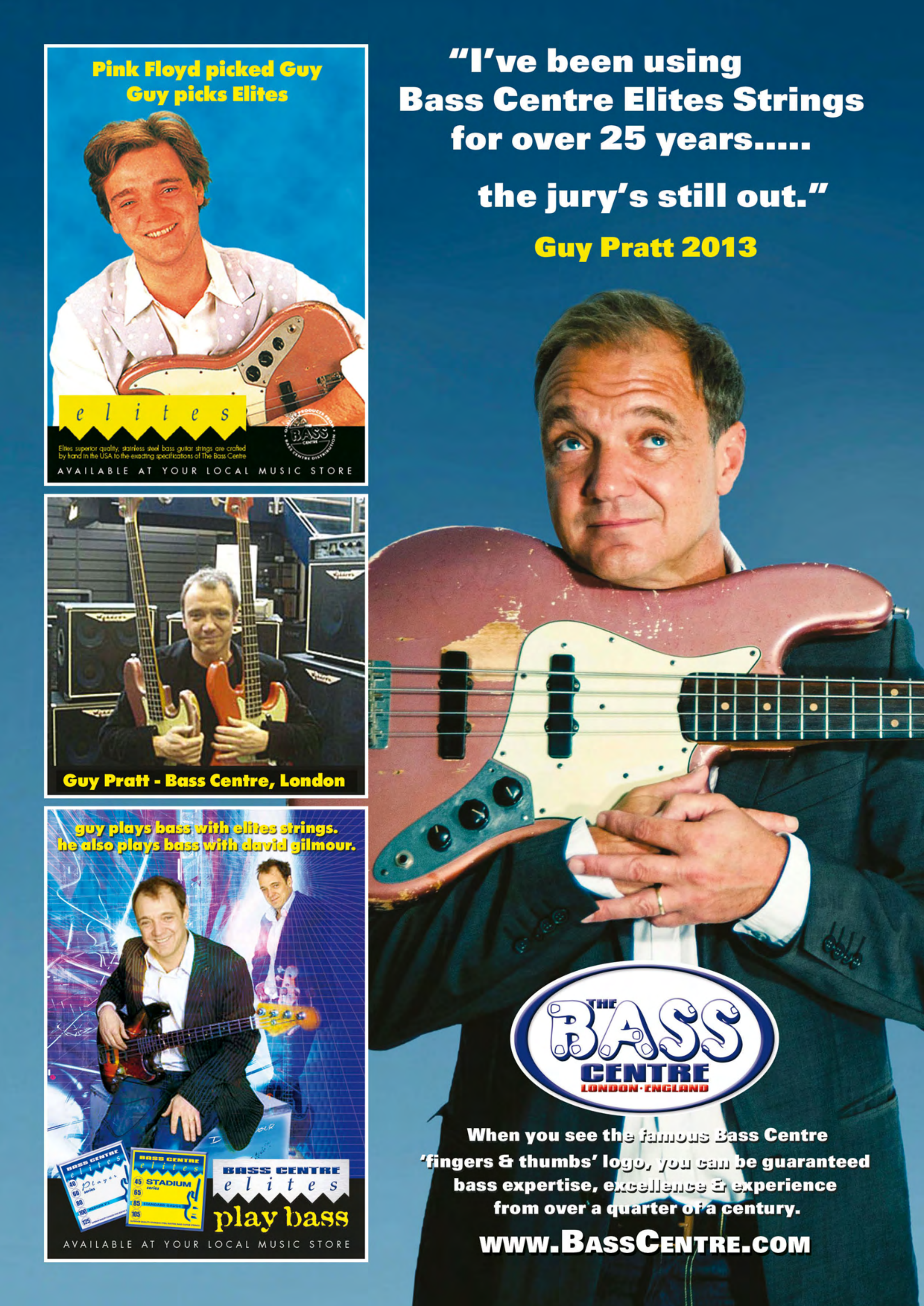
The MU's Pete Thoms

Pics: Hayley Madden

an important part of the CV that will make most employers take you more seriously."

So does Pete recommend name-dropping in a CV? "Absolutely. You let people know; that's expected. People should never be shy. If you can say: 'I played guitar on a Robbie Williams track', they'll say: 'This guy's obviously of a very high calibre'." A CV with reference to a well designed website with audio or video clips makes it quick and easy for employers to assess your skill level and style of playing. You can also add links to artists with whom you have worked, and indicate on your CV that it is your guitar playing on a track at 1:33.

As well as CV 'do's' there is one major 'don't': putting too much focus on education. Any mention of grades and qualifications should be brief and come at the end of your CV. "Employers want to know what performances you've done, who you've played with and your actual experience," Pete says. "People aren't very interested in how many A-levels you have."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The man who would be KING

KINGS OF LEON BASSIST JARED FOLLOWILL MEETS JON D'AURIA FOR THE LOWDOWN ON HIS BAND'S NEW RECORD, LIFE ON THE ROAD AND THE SMALL MATTER OF SELLING OUT STADIUMS WITH HIS BAND OF BROTHERS...

PICS: KEVIN ESTRADA

There's an old proverb that proclaims that the best way to learn how to do something is simply to do it. Nobody knows this better than Jared Followill, who was only 15 years old – no, that's not a typo – when his older brothers Caleb (guitar, vocals) and Nathan (drums) and his cousin Matthew (guitar) convinced him to step away from his schooling in 2002 to play bass in their budding rock band in Nashville, Tennessee.

Back then, Jared's only problem (though admittedly quite a large one) was that he had never played a bass in his life, so he immediately went out and bought a modest four-string and began woodshedding albums by the Pixies, the Clash and Joy Division to figure out how to play. Just a couple of months later he found himself in the studio, recording the Kings Of Leon's debut album, *Youth And Young Manhood*, with little more than youthful ambition and a rudimentary understanding of how to play his instrument.

Twelve years later, Kings of Leon have become one of the biggest bands in rock'n'roll, having released six albums, each shifting millions of copies worldwide, winning three Grammys and countless other awards, and selling out arenas in every corner of the globe. In that time, Jared's ability and performances as a bass player have flourished, as his early root-fifth, guitar-following riffs have evolved into

> "After all these years I think I've finally figured out how to play this thing"

> "I like to write a bunch of different riffs so that I have options, and then I'll scrap them and rewrite them again until they tick"

finely crafted lines that affect the music both rhythmically and melodically. Not only has he grown to embody the role of a bassist, he has also developed his own unique voice on the instrument.

"After all these years I think I've finally figured out how to play this thing," says Followill, now 27. "When I first started out, I wanted my sound to be deep and bassy, with no string definition. That was probably because I was self-conscious: I was new to playing and it would cover up my mistakes. In my next phase, I went with more of a crunchy mid-range tone that made my amp sound like I had a fuzz pedal on, so I could still be a little bit sloppy. Now I'm getting to where I just want a clean tone that has a little bit of dirt. My sound keeps changing and evolving, the more confident I get."

Followill's evolution is more noticeable than ever on his band's sixth album, *Mechanical Bull*, released last autumn. Songs like 'Work On Me', 'Temple' and 'Family Tree' all centre round his tight-pocketed grooves and creative lines. It's no surprise that Followill played a bigger role in writing the new material, as he teamed up with his brothers during the early sessions to hash out ideas and lay down his bass-lines as a foundation for the other instruments.

"I listen to the song ideas and then start writing my bass parts, and usually my lines are one of the first things written," he explains. "I like to write a bunch of different riffs so that I have options, and then I'll scrap them and rewrite them again until they stick. I wanted to write more complicated parts and challenge myself a little bit more in the studio this time." He adds: "It always changes each record, because I get a little bit better and I'm able to do the things that I hear in my head more. In the beginning I would basically play along with chords and write really simple parts, but now I can usually play the ideas that I hear."

The album's first single, 'Supersoaker', features a tight backbeat bass-line that moves the verse while supplying a driving foundation for the vocal melody in the chorus. As Followill's bass-lines go, this is undoubtedly one of his finest. "It was one of those things where Caleb had written a really chugging guitar part, and it gave me a lot of space to write in. I just started playing that bass-line and Nathan started playing drums, and we locked it in," explains Followill. "Before I wrote it I thought it would have more of a Police-type feel, but after it was completed I realised that it sounded more like Nikolai Fraiture from the Strokes. It's definitely a fun song to play live, because I can just sit back and groove out and throw in little variations throughout it."

Influenced by players such as Kim Deal, Peter Hook, Paul Simon and Sting, Followill's recent playing takes on a melodic role that supports the vocal lines and explores harmonic territory of its own. "What does it for me is a bass-line that carries a melody on its own. It's kind of rare in music for the bass to be the lead melody, but then again, I'm a really weird bass player," admits Followill. "It's always been hard for me to lock in with the kick drum, because I don't think that way. I was never taught how to play the bass, so I've never played it properly. A lot of times I'll write to the guitar riffs before the drums are even in place. That's kind of a weird thing to do, but then our drummer Nathan comes in and he locks into my bass. He really helped me along in the beginning by doing that, but now it's just become our style."

In the recording sessions for *Mechanical Bull*, Followill spent more time than on previous albums honing his tone with long-time producer Angelo Petraglia in the Kings' Nashville studio. Going for a vintage rock tone, Followill captured a punchy midrange sound that retained enough deep lows to fill out the sonic spectrum. "I really changed my tone up on this album and I'm really happy with how it turned out," he says. "I used to use midrange and gain instead of volume to get that crunch, but lately I've been cleaning it up and taking the midrange and gain down a bit. It's still probably heavier than most bass players dial it in, but I like to turn the volume and bass up a bit and keep the midrange around 11 o'clock."

To increase his tone range, Followill decided to experiment with different basses for the *Mechanical Bull* sessions, something that he had seldom done in the past. Known for his preference for Gibson Thunderbirds, Followill finally decided to give a few other axes a shot.

"I used more basses on this album than I ever had before. I really had a ton of options in there. I even brought in a fretless bass to write on, though I didn't end up recording with it," says Followill. "My main bass, as always, was my Thunderbird, and I used that a lot, but I also used a Fender P-Bass and an Epiphone hollow-body bass that I played on the song 'Rock City'. As we were getting our sounds together, different basses would sound completely different from song to song. I wanted to test out basses with different necks to see what kind of tone I could get from them. I feel like each of the basses actually made me write differently."

Gibson

Regardless of the bass which Followill picks up, the sound he generates is consistent, thanks to his strong picking hand. "I don't really play wide open too much. Most of the time I'll mute the bass with the side of my hand on the bridge," says Followill. "I mute most all of my notes during the verses and then I open them up wide for the choruses so that my tone gets way bigger. That way, when the guitars hit their distortion and the drums open up, everything is just huge and the bass booms. I use picks most of the time, but I've started to use my fingers more and more. I also use my thumb for two of our songs on this album. I played a lot of keyboard bass on some of our earlier material, but on this album I stuck with playing everything straight up on the bass."

"I'm one of those annoying bass players that always plays too loudly for their own good – but I love it"

Followill translates his studio sound to the live stage with ease, thanks to his oversized rig and his penchant for chest-rattling decibels. While his bandmates may claim that his volume levels border on the excessive, he needs all the help he can get to fill the arena-sized venues that the Kings play. "It's no secret that I play really loud on stage. My perfect sound is crazy loud," muses Followill. "I use big refrigerator Ampegs and put them on their sides: I stack them so that they're just monstrous. It creates a huge, mean rumble behind me."

His pedalboard contains a TC Electronic Hall Of Fame reverb and Flashback delay, a Boss TR2 Tremolo, an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff, a Line 6 DL4, a Boss ME50 and a Voodoo Lab Ground Control Pro, while his Thunderbirds come loaded with D'Addario EXL 165-4 strings. "I've had to progressively move over on the stage a few feet from Caleb over the years," he laughs. "He keeps pushing me into the corner because I keep getting louder and louder. I'm one of those annoying bass players that always plays too loudly for their own good – but I love it."

I ask Followill how he makes certain that he is ready for every performance, and he explains: "It's always important for me to be physically ready when we head out on tour. I don't want to sound like a dick, and I'm not a buff dude at all, but I go to the gym all the time, so my stamina is pretty strong for our shows. When we take a little time off, then my fingers start to kill me when I play, because my callouses wear off really quickly. I have to play a lot before the first few shows of the tour to get them back. Typically, before each set I'll pace back and forth just doing runs on my bass, while I have a couple of drinks. I always like to be nervous before a show because it helps me play better."

As if nerves aren't enough to keep Followill focused for his performances, he has devised a system where he rates his performance each night to make sure that his playing stays consistent over long tours. "I'm very involved in writing the set-lists each night: for me it's almost like it's a sport, to see which songs go well and which we could've done better. I even rate my performance and my playing every night; I have a whole system for it. For every missed note or wrong note I'll take three or four points off of my score: that way I can really try to deliver a perfect show every single night. It doesn't happen all the time, but I strive towards it. I always look to the audience for inspiration: if the crowd is going crazy then I can have a lower personal score and still be excited about the gig."

At this point in his career, Followill often reflects on the early days, when that leap of faith in 2002 was rewarded with a record deal and an epic path into his future. As certain as he was at the time that he was making the right move, he never would have guessed the amount of success that would follow. "I had absolutely no idea that we'd get to this level," he laughs. "I didn't even know if we were going to stay together as a band at certain points. We've constantly felt like everything has been too good to be true, every step of the way. We always think that we'll get dropped from our label after every album. Luckily Europe and the UK support us so much. Even with our first EP, *Holy Roller Novocaine* (2003), it blew our minds that 10,000 people were listening to our music. From there it's been a really gradual climb, like having your hand in a pan of water on the stove and not noticing that it's getting hotter."

Every band inevitably has its ups and downs, and Kings Of Leon is no exception. However, the fact that the Followills are related has helped them through many turbulent times. They're his family, after all. "It's been amazing to be in a band with my brothers and my cousin," he tells us. "In other bands there's always a certain common level of courtesy, but that's definitely not there with our band because we're brothers. We're totally honest and blunt and we say whatever we want. I would imagine that being in a band with other people would eventually get to that point where you cut the BS and get down to what you really want to say. It's awesome, though. All of us are married now, so it's even more familial. It feels like a travelling family circus."

With a full touring schedule and a seventh album on the horizon, Followill is gearing up for the road ahead. But before he embarks on the next tour bus stretch, he offers some advice to bass players who want to follow his path. "Play your butt off to learn the basics," he says, "and then step away from that and do your own thing so you can find your own voice. I feel like I did it the right way, but maybe I could've been better if I would have gotten lessons. Then again, that might have messed up my mojo and changed the way I played. If you learn enough songs of the style and bands you like, then playing will become second nature. But most importantly, just love what you do. If you don't love it you probably shouldn't be doing it."

***Mechanical Bull* is out now. The Kings Of Leon will be touring the UK in June. Info: www.kingsofleon.com.**

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Go East, Young Man

DUFF BATTYE PACKS HIS BAGS AND HEADS TO INDONESIA FOR A VISIT TO CORT'S 'KINGDOM OF GUITAR', WHERE HE MEETS THE MAKERS OF — GULP — 600,000 GUITARS A YEAR...

Although you might not know much about Cort basses, the likelihood is that you will have played one that's emerged from their factory doors. As well as its own range, Cort also OEMs – industry speak for original equipment manufacture – for other brands too. Its parent company, Cor-Tek, was founded in 1973 and since those early days the company has grown into one of the biggest guitar manufacturers in the world It has produced some 14 million guitars from 1973-2014 and is now exporting to 55 countries.

Cor-Tek production was initially based in Korea. Since then, they have opened factories in China and Indonesia, the latter being where all of Cort's electric instruments and amps are made, as well as some acoustic instruments. The factory, based just outside Surabaya in Jawa, is a huge operation. Nicknamed the 'Kingdom Of Guitar', the facility employs over 2000 workers. It's a sprawling industrial complex, containing 30 buildings over 80,000 square metres, and it produces around 600,000 guitars a year as well as a massive 100,000 guitar pickups every month.

MASTER CRAFTSMANSHIP

As we're guided around the plant, which is split into a series of individual facilities, the technology on show is impressive. It's amazing to witness the transformation that occurs here, from raw material to finished product.

First, we see huge slabs of wood being delivered en masse. Cort is very particular about sourcing wood: for example, every piece of maple used in their basses must come from Canada. The separate blocks of wood are then transformed into the bodies and necks that will go on to adorn the walls of your local music shop. Although parts of the plant are automated – such as the laser machine that cuts out fret markers – much of the process is still done by hand. Watching the staff at work is an eye-opener; from hand-sanding necks to hammering in frets, from spray-painting bodies to testing pickups, it's obviously highly skilled work. On the production line, there's a worker who spends the entire day stringing basses. He certainly put my efforts to shame...

If I had to pick one job in the Cort factory, it would be quality control. At the end of production, each Cort bass is hand-tested for intonation, set-up, finish and electronics. Although they must adhere to strict guidelines, the quality controllers are living the dream, playing beautiful basses all day long. Seeing them fretting and playing a variety of basses with such ease makes you wonder whether they might be future session players.

MAJOR ENDORSEMENT

Brand endorsees have not been a major factor in Cort's marketing to date, but it's likely that Cort will start appearing as an endorser more often in the future. On the bass front, Cort recently signed *BGM* columnist and all-round legend Jeff Berlin, who was playing his new Cort Rithimic bass at the London Bass Guitar show in February. All 10 Rithimics on sale at the show were sold,

and it's now available in shops across the UK, retailing at £799 without a case. We gave our verdict on the Rithimic in last month's *BGM* – there's no denying our love for this fine-looking instrument. Interestingly, Cort are offering two different set-up options: a standard factory setup, or a personal service where they will set the bass up exactly as Jeff Berlin himself plays it, bringing a whole new dimension to the concept of 'playing like your hero'.

Cort ships products to the UK and then uses distributors Proel to get them out to the shops. Matthew Bell is the man in charge of Cort at Proel, and he tells us: "Most UK dealers and customers currently see Cort as an unknown quantity. What we say is that Cort is the number one value brand in the world. They have their own dedicated factories, so nothing is outsourced. We also personally check and set up every guitar that leaves our warehouse, so when the dealers receive them in the shops, they're immaculate. The only thing that can go wrong is shipping. If anything is wrong, we replace the guitar."

ONE TO WATCH

Our factory visit is a fascinating insight into the realities of bass manufacture. It's a real privilege to witness the care and dedication that goes into these instruments, ultimately destined stages, rehearsal facilities and bedrooms across the world. In addition to the Jeff Berlin signature, Cort offer a wide range of basses, including the Action, Artisan, GB, Arona, Curbow and T Series, all of which have multiple options for body, neck and string configuration. What all of them have in common is a very competitive price, even though they're manufactured by the same craftspeople that also produce high-end basses. With newfound respect for the brand, I'll be checking Cort out a lot more in the future.

The King & Us

WITH A FULL SCHEDULE AHEAD OF HIM, LEVEL 42'S MARK KING CHECKS IN FOR AN UPDATE. MIKE BROOKS TAKES NOTES

It's been a while since we caught up with Mark (aka Lord Thumb of Thumpington) and with festival season upon us and an impending tour in the autumn, we thought it was about time we checked in with the man responsible for more exotic bass sales than any other British bassist.

Among an array of familiar names from the 80s, Level 42 will be gracing the Rewind 80s North and South shows in Henley and Cheshire during August. Does Mark enjoy these shows – as they are, by their very nature, quite different from a Level 42 gig? "Playing to 20,000 people is very nice, and it's also a great opportunity to catch up with old mates from back in the day. The fact that all of these guys are doing these festivals is a testament to the quality of the material in the first place."

Mark is no stranger to working alongside various bands on a given event bill: back in the mid-80s he was the first call bassist for the Prince's Trust all-star band alongside the likes of Eric Clapton, Elton John and Phil Collins. There were often mutterings of a supergroup featuring Brian May, Mark and Phil. "It's funny," he muses. "There was talk about something happening around that time, but the names involved kept changing. There was a bit of a gap between the initial idea and actually doing anything, but then when Britpop hit, the idea got hit on the head as it was considered unhip at the time. Midge Ure and I have talked about perhaps taking something in that vein on the road, but then you would damage the reason that these guys get together for the Prince's Trust."

Last year, Mark was invited to get up on stage with Larry Graham at his Jazz Café gigs in London and then again a few months later at the North Sea Jazz Festival. It was quite a spectacle to see two legends of slap bass on the same stage, yet what came across was how different their respective styles were. Mark takes up the story: "I absolutely loved it! Larry's pedigree as the granddaddy of slap bass is without question, and to stand on stage with him was such a thrill. The two styles of playing worked really well: obviously my style is more upper register whereas Larry's carries a lot more bottom end thump. He beats out all the notes with such power. Chances like that, to play with players of his stature, come along so rarely. The North Sea Jazz gig was an amazing night too. Prince was there and he came up onstage – a man of few words! – and then Carlos Santana came up and started trading licks. It was mindblowing! One of the earliest albums I went nuts about was Santana's *Caravanserai* (1972) which featured Doug Rauch on bass. It was a massive influence on Level 42 in the early years – it's well worth checking out."

Let's talk gear. The latest incarnation of Mark's signature Status Kingbass sports more bling than you can shake a stick at: what's in store for the next makeover? "I'm having a chrome one done," he reveals, "which should have quite a 70s retro vibe going on. I really love the EQ possibilities of the Paramatrix: when I recorded it at Ronnie Scott's in 2012, the bottom end was so well defined. Rob Green at Status is so clever at noodling around with stuff: he can sit with a box of resistors, with a bass plugged into a laptop, and he gets the high end working just how I want to hear it. I loved the Jaydees and the Alembics, but I wanted the Kingbass to be guitar-sized and it really works for me. We hit the nail on the head."

Having achieved so much, it must be quite gratifying for him to see the band performing with renewed vigour over the past few years. "There's plenty of work for us out there, and it's nice that we don't have to compete with other bands or get in the charts," he replies. "We have real freedom to take the work we want to do. I know that if I don't play the hits, the majority of punters at a show will feel short-changed, but I try to strike a balance. I loved the Ronnie Scott's shows we did, as it felt like me and my mates being self-indulgent, and the crowds loved it. Then they asked us back and wanted more of the hits. Sometimes you can't win either way!"

Level 42 will be appearing at the Rewind Festivals in July and August. Info: www.rewindfestival.com, www.level42.com.

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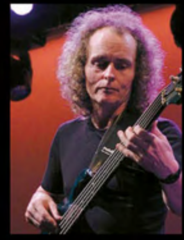

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THORNEY SUBJECTS

LAMB BASSIST JON THORNE, ONE OF BRITAIN'S MOST ACCLAIMED DOUBLE BASS PLAYERS, WOWED THE LONDON BASS GUITAR SHOW 2014 WITH HIS AMAZING PLAYING. JOEL MCIVER ASKS HIM HOW HE MAKES THE BIG NOISES EVEN BIGGER PICS: ECKIE

We're sitting in a grey hotel on a rainy day near Heathrow, where songwriter, teacher and bassist extraordinaire Jon Thorne is awaiting a flight to Moscow, where he'll be joined by his Lamb bandmates Andy Barlow and Lou Rhodes, but there's nothing boring about our conversation. Thorne, a prodigious talent in many areas of music since the mid-1990s, is remembering his performance at the recent London Bass Guitar Show, where he shared the stage with the equally pyrotechnic Steve Lawson. "Now that was a lot of fun!" he recalls. "Steve generously said, do you want to jam? And we just went for it..."

Visit YouTube for footage of that stellar performance (soon to be released separately) or check out Thorne's past performances with Lamb or any of his many other collaborations, and it's immediately clear that this is no ordinary bassist. Part of the time in Lamb, he says, he isn't even in full control of his tone.

"Lamb's gig is mixed live on stage by Andy," Thorne explains, sipping on a rum and Coke. "Everything we play goes through his desk. It's never mixed the same way twice, so there's a strong, challenging improvisational element to it. The song structures sometimes change, and the mixing is very fluid, which requires a jazz skill-set of being able to improvise. Andy throws loads of effects at me, so I'm not always in full control of my sound, which means I have to truly respond in the moment."

Sounds like a blast, we reckon, for anyone who likes to improvise. "I absolutely love it!" Thorne replies. "We bounce off each other in a gig, and that's part of what makes the music work so well. A lot of the effects Andy puts on the bass aren't bass-like at all. It's great fun. I've been very lucky to find myself in a band that allows so much free expression, and that is also internationally successful. We've toured 45 countries, and our fourth gig was at the Roskilde Festival in front of 35,000 people. Incredible!"

So what gear will Thorne be lugging all the way to Moscow? "My Azola travel upright bass is already over there," he says. "My backline consists of a TC Electronic RH750 head plus 1x15 and 4x10 cabs. My pedals are TC too, and they've gone out there as well: a Hall Of Fame reverb, a Corona chorus and a Dark Matter distortion pedal."

Like many a bass-playing star of stage and studio before him, Thorne has recorded his own Toneprints for TC Electronic. "I've got three, and I think I'm going out there to do more with them in the summer," he explains. "Last time, the company head Morten Ehlers came over with a computer, and we talked about the kind of sounds I wanted to use and develop in the Lamb gig, and then we spent an afternoon experimenting and creating them. They're a really great

company to be involved with, because not only are they extremely innovative, but you also have a really personal relationship with them. I first met them when I got a call out of the blue when touring Denmark with Lamb. They said, 'We've been big fans for years' and they all came to the Aarhus gig – about 20 of them!"

Let's talk basses. Now, if you think your 1974 Fender is a vintage model, wait until you hear this. Thorne – who describes his bass activity as 90 per cent upright, 10 per cent electric – brought a 51 upright to the LBGS this year. Not 1951, mind – 1851. "It's German, made by Moritz," he says. "It doesn't travel particularly well, and as with so many older instruments, it's developing a crack in the shoulder which I'm going to have to get sorted. Luckily I have a gifted luthier living nearby on the Isle Of Wight, Rafe Spencer, who looks after it."

He goes on: "I'm between electric basses at the moment. I had a 1996 limited-edition Precision, but I gave it to my daughter for her 18th birthday, so when I moved to the island I asked to borrow one from a local bassist called Tim Marshall. He said he'd been left one in a will by the bassist from the Foundations, who had a big hit in 1968 with 'Build Me Up Buttercup'. It was a badly beaten vintage Fender Jazz. Half the finish was gone, and for some reason they'd gouged a hole in the back and put a battery cavity and active pickups into it. The neck was bowed and cracked, too – it was unplayable, really. Tim had a bag full of the original bits and pieces, though, and said that if I could restore it I could have it on a permanent loan. So I took it to Rafe and asked him if he thought it was redeemable, which he thought with a lot of work it was. He's lent me his Precision in the meantime."

We hate to be devil's advocates, but surely he could have spent £200 on a bog-standard Far Eastern bass and got that vintage Fender sound with one of his pedals? "I could have done that, but it's not as romantic a story," laughs Thorne. "Also, I have an affinity to old Fenders. I used to own a beautiful old 1971 Jazz, which I loved. I've had a couple of 70s black Precisions too, which are the sexiest basses in existence for me. So I like the idea of something with a bit of history, especially as I love that Foundations song."

Looking back to ye olde days, we ask Thorne how he got into the bass in the first place. Unusually for a man who makes his living from a phenomenal playing technique, Thorne only picked up an instrument for the first time at the point where most wannabe rock stars are considering abandoning their dreams for a job in a bank.

> "I HAVE AN AFFINITY TO OLD FENDERS. I USED TO OWN A BEAUTIFUL OLD 1971 JAZZ, WHICH I LOVED"

"I didn't play bass – or any other instrument – until I was 23, living in Northwich in Cheshire," Thorne recalls. "But a light went on when I heard the double bass: it illuminated my path. It was Kate Bush who got me into double bass. I heard Danny Thompson on her *Hounds Of Love* record, and I was like 'What is that sound? It's amazing!' Eberhard Weber was also on that record, and so I got into ECM Records through him, and into Mingus and jazz through Danny. My mate Mark Brighton did a compilation of ECM artists for me, with people like Gary Peacock and Dave Holland and Miroslav Vitous: it was a whole world of music out there that I had no idea about."

Readers of a certain age (let's say over 35) will keenly recall a time in pop music when the bass was at front and centre of any radio hit – and it was in this era that Thorne first got his bass chops on. "The first thing that ever grabbed me electric bass-wise was the Police, when I was at school: I absolutely loved them," he says. "Sting has constantly striven to find different directions as a musician as he's got older. He hasn't rested on his laurels. He's kept himself trying to grow as a musician. That's very inspirational. I've only heard good things about him from people who have worked with him: he looks after his crew really well on tour, an essential attribute, I think. Anyway, he was at the root of my first interest in bass."

"I loved Simon Gallup from the Cure too," he continues, "and Mark Burgess from the Chameleons. Also Siouxsie & The Banshees' bassist Steve Severin: I really loved that post-punk driving energy. Anyway, I loved music dearly, but I'd never really considered it as a career until I heard double bass. I couldn't afford one, though, so initially I bought a Precision copy for 60 quid. Then for £275 I got a really nasty plywood double bass: it was a hideous instrument and your hands fell off after five seconds, but I absolutely loved it."

Hideous bass in hand, Thorne approached his task with total dedication, he tells us. "I packed in my job in a bookshop and locked myself away for two years, trying to learn how to play. I went to as many jam sessions as I could and hung out with as many musicians as possible, answering all the adverts looking for bass players. I never had any lessons, I just learned on the job. I luckily had a natural aptitude for it – but it was difficult, because all the established players were schooled and could read music. All I really had was my enthusiasm, and an absolute desire to persist and improve and not give up. I was fortunate that I was in Manchester, because at that time as there was a strong and extremely supportive set of emerging jazz and improvising musicians, like John Ellis and Luke Flowers, later with the Cinematic Orchestra."

Eventually Thorne's efforts paid off, he recalls, with encouragement from one of the aforementioned bass icons. "I spent about five years getting my playing together," he says. "I had an idea in my head of what I wanted my bass playing to sound like – that big, full, resonant tone that Danny Thompson had. I'd only been playing a few weeks, and Danny was doing a gig with his band called Whatever, so I thought 'I'll go and meet my hero' and went and waited outside the Band On The Wall in the rain. When the group arrived, rather than swat me aside, Danny invited me in, got me a seat in the front row to watch the soundcheck and asked me onto the stage to play his bass afterwards. He was incredibly generous and, crucially, encouraged me to keep an open mind to all music. I said 'I'm 23, I don't know if this is going to work out' and he said, 'Of course it will! Get on with it!'"

Thorne's gig in Lamb came about after a fortuitous meeting with one of Manchester's key movers and shakers, he explains. "I was running a jam session at Night And Day in Manchester, and a guy came up to me and asked if I was interested in trying out for an emerging electronica band. I was, and he took my phone number to pass on. It turned out to be Graham Massey, who was producing Björk's album *Post* at the time. It was incredibly fortuitous. He gave my number to Andy and Lou, and I was offered an audition, which thankfully I passed. A huge turning point."

Four years later, Thorne's association with Thompson was reinforced when the two came back into contact. "Danny got seriously ill: he had a stroke in the middle of a heart operation and nearly died," remembers Thorne. "Lamb were on their second album, *Fear Of Fours*, at the time. I'd written in the sleevenotes that I dedicated all my playing on the album to Danny. Unknown to me, Natasha Khan from Bat For Lashes is Danny's god-daughter, and she'd given him our album just before he got ill. I found out what hospital he was in, and I wrote him a fairly long letter, saying that I was now touring the world, that he had irrevocably changed my life with his inspiration and his musicianship, and that I wanted to thank him for it."

"About six months later," he continues. "to my total surprise, he called to thank me! We've since become friends, culminating in *Watching The Well* on the Naim label, an album I wrote songs for, which featured Danny in an orchestral setting."

So, not a bad career as a bassman, all told – and Thorne is just getting into his stride, with Lamb coming out of a hiatus at peak strength. "I've been in Lamb since its inception in 1996, and I've done every gig so far," Thorne says with justifiable pride. "Andy has been working as a producer for David Gray and Lou has been doing her solo album, but these gigs in Moscow mark that start of our return – and there's a new album and world tour coming in the autumn!" Add to that James Yorkston's and Kathryn Williams' upcoming records and tours, and it looks like this bassist won't be hanging up his instruments any time soon... ■

Info: www.jonthorne.co.uk, www.lambofficial.com, @JonThorne3

IN THE PINK

WHEN IT COMES TO BASS, GUY PRATT HAS SEEN IT ALL, DONE IT ALL, BEEN THERE, BOUGHT THE T-SHIRT, WRITTEN A BOOK ABOUT IT AND DONE STAND-UP COMEDY TOURS BASED ON IT. MIKE BROOKS MEETS THE GREAT MAN

PHOTOS BY TINA K

Not only does Guy Pratt have a playing CV the envy of bassists the world over; not only has he played bass in one of the world's most legendary rock bands and is able to count its frontman as a close friend; not only does he have enough stories of the rich and famous to write a book of anecdotes and turn the contents of that book into a one-man stand-up show – he's also a genuinely nice guy to be around, as we found out when we caught up with him at the London Bass Guitar Show last year, where he appeared courtesy of his long-time amp manufacturers Ashdown.

Here is a bassist who has been at the top of his game for over 30 years, cultivating a career that has seen him involved with a who's who list of the music business. Although luck can play a part in becoming successful, tenacity, determination and sheer hard work are just as important – and on talking to Guy, you get the impression that his quickfire wit and ability to simply get on with people also count for a lot.

Guy cites the Who as an early influence from the outset of his love affair with music, but it wasn't until he fell under the spell of disco that his bass playing ability really took off. "I really didn't like disco at first," he chuckles. "I didn't think you were allowed to like stuff like that – because when you're a kid, you're very much subject to and influenced by what your friends like. I remember having a sneaky affection for 'Jive Talking' by the Bee Gees, but it wasn't until I heard Chic and Bernard Edwards that the penny really dropped for me. And then, when I heard Earth, Wind & Fire, which was and wasn't disco, it had the most amazing musicianship I'd ever heard up to that point. Then I heard 'Good Times' by Chic and thought, 'What the hell is this?' It was a real bass epiphany moment. Looking back over the fullness of time, Chic were practically the Clash. Those songs were incredibly political. Around 1978, 1979 and 1980, I was playing in a mod band. The whole rock thing was going nowhere, and I got to a point

"ON A SESSION YOU HAVE TO HAVE IDEAS AND COME UP WITH THINGS IMMEDIATELY"

with the instrument where I was bored of playing with a pick."

This led Guy to adapt his playing techniques in order to accommodate the rhythmic intricacies of disco, he tells us. "I quickly had to work on my fingerstyle playing: it was a great lesson. You can always tell when a guitarist is playing a bass, they have a totally different feel to how we would play a line, and the way it sits is different. And guitarists use a pick differently to how we might use one." With the legendary bass-lines of Bernard Edwards playing in his head, did Bernard have an influence? "Oh massive, massive, massive. When I worked with Robert Palmer, Bernard sat me down and gave me a few lessons, none of which I can remember as I was so in awe of him and slightly drunk – but he was an incredibly inspiring guy to be around."

The early 80s were a great time for bass players. Which songs and players were catching Guy's ear back then? "I was basically listening out for any interesting stuff at that time," he says. "And you're right, there was a lot of interesting and diverse stuff going on. Every time a record came out with Tony Levin or Pino Palladino on it, they were doing something you hadn't heard before. You know, it was a brilliant, fantastic time for bass playing. I never wanted to be a busy session player, I never had a plan – I just fell into it. I was always a band player and I like being in a band situation. I still find it quite extraordinary that I am. It's quite funny, I did a session the other day with a British band and they were all hanging out together and I thought 'I haven't done this in ages' – yet as a young man, I would have been determined that by the time we all left the studio, they would all be my mates. Back then, that was what mattered in order to get on."

Having worked with a veritable list of musical legends – most of whom feature to some extent in Guy's 2007 book *My Bass And Other Animals*, if he were stranded on a desert island with any of his previous employers, living or dead, who would he choose to be stranded with? Surprisingly, his choice is immediate. "Number one, David Gilmour – because he's the most consummate musician I've ever met. Number two would be Robert Palmer, because of everything about him: he lived his life on his own terms and he was the only person I've met who could say 'Listen to this Ozzy Osbourne track, it's amazing' and you would have to sit back and agree that he was absolutely right."

Does Guy ever feel that he needs to give himself a push to from time to time to stay on top of his game – and does he find it relatively easy or difficult to hit top gear when a tour or session is imminent? "You need to go on tour to really reach the top level: it's as simple as that. I don't get callouses any more: a few days of rehearsal and playing gives me tender fingers, but then that's it. I never make myself play, so if I'm not working, I'm not playing. I don't practise just to play, I might come up with some ideas at home for various things. I absolutely notice after a few gigs on the road that I'm playing better, but I can't make myself better, if that makes sense!"

With so much studio session work behind him and a highly impressive list of credits, Guy is the ideal man to ask about how he comes up with bass parts in the studio when the pressure is on. "On a session you have to have ideas and come up with things immediately. So often you can be driving home from a session and you start thinking 'What if I'd played such and such?' but that's a part of the job." If he finds himself short on ideas, does he go back and listen to stuff that influences him, or does he just hope that something will develop the next day? "Yeah, that's basically it! Something usually pops out of the ether..." ■

Guy Pratt plays a solo show in Widcombe Hill on June 5 and will be touring with Roxy Music this summer. Info and tickets: www.guypratt.com.

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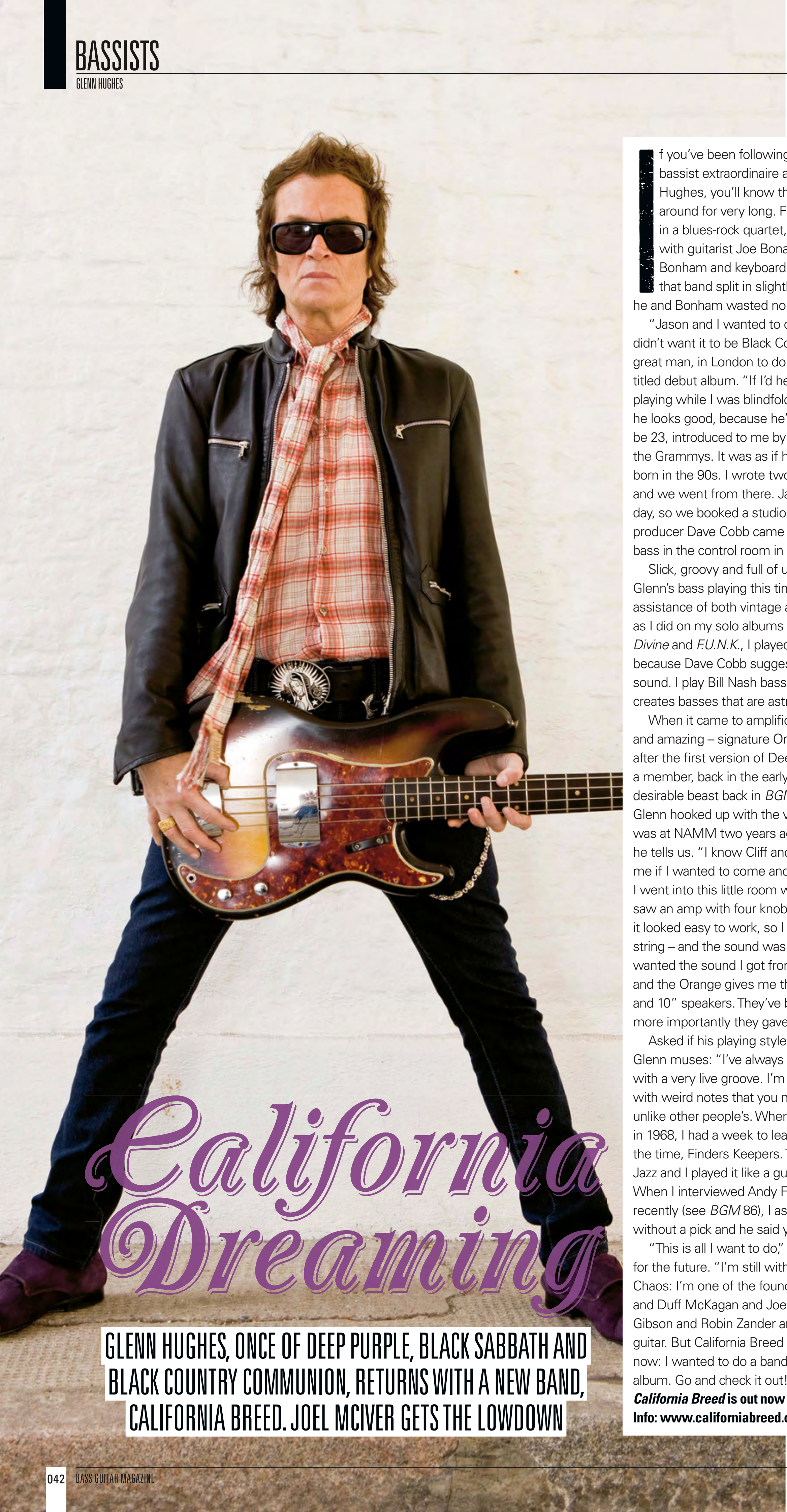

California Dreaming

GLENN HUGHES, ONCE OF DEEP PURPLE, BLACK SABBATH AND BLACK COUNTRY COMMUNION, RETURNS WITH A NEW BAND, CALIFORNIA BREED. JOEL MCIVER GETS THE LOWDOWN

If you've been following the remarkable career of bassist extraordinaire and Voice Of Rock Glenn Hughes, you'll know that he's not a guy who sits around for very long. From 2009 to last year he played in a blues-rock quartet, Black Country Communion, with guitarist Joe Bonamassa, drummer Jason Bonham and keyboardist Derek Sherinian, but when that band split in slightly acrimonious circumstances he and Bonham wasted no time in forming a new band.

"Jason and I wanted to create something new: we didn't want it to be Black Country Communion 2," said the great man, in London to do press for California Breed's self-titled debut album. "If I'd heard our guitarist Andrew Watt's playing while I was blindfolded, I would have said, 'I hope he looks good, because he's got the gig!' He happened to be 23, introduced to me by Julian Lennon the night before the Grammys. It was as if he'd been writing in the 60s but born in the 90s. I wrote two songs with him at my home and we went from there. Jason was available the next day, so we booked a studio and demoed the songs. Our producer Dave Cobb came in to do the album. I did the bass in the control room in two hours!"

Slick, groovy and full of unexpected melodic twists, Glenn's bass playing this time out was laid down with the assistance of both vintage and new gear. "On this album, as I did on my solo albums *Soul Mover*, *Music For The Divine* and *F.U.N.K.*, I played my 1965 sunburst Precision, because Dave Cobb suggested we go back to a vintage sound. I play Bill Nash basses when I'm on the road: Bill creates basses that are astronomically brilliant."

When it came to amplification, Glenn used his new – and amazing – signature Orange stack, the MKIII (named after the first version of Deep Purple of which he was a member, back in the early 1970s). We reviewed this desirable beast back in *BGM* 88 and are keen to know how Glenn hooked up with the venerable British amp-makers. "I was at NAMM two years ago and I walked past Orange," he tells us. "I know Cliff and Damon there, and they asked me if I wanted to come and check out their new amps. I went into this little room with a P-Bass on the wall and saw an amp with four knobs on it. I'm not technical and it looked easy to work, so I plugged it in and plucked the string – and the sound was pure Glenn Hughes in 1977! I wanted the sound I got from my Hiwatts back in the day, and the Orange gives me that tube sound, with the 15" and 10" speakers. They've been very gracious to me, but more importantly they gave me the sound that I wanted."

Asked if his playing style is evolving over the years, Glenn muses: "I've always been this kind of bass player, with a very live groove. I'm not trying to go somewhere with weird notes that you might not expect. My runs are unlike other people's. When I switched from guitar to bass in 1968, I had a week to learn all the songs in my band at the time, Finders Keepers. The bass player sold me a 62 Jazz and I played it like a guitar, rather than with fingers. When I interviewed Andy Fraser for *Bass Guitar Magazine* recently (see *BGM* 86), I asked if he'd learned to play without a pick and he said yes. I wish I'd done that."

"This is all I want to do," he says, asked about his plans for the future. "I'm still with the supergroup Kings Of Chaos: I'm one of the founder members with Matt Sorum and Duff McKagan and Joe Elliott, and Slash and Billy Gibson and Robin Zander and others have come in to play guitar. But California Breed is my number one priority right now: I wanted to do a band right now, rather than a solo album. Go and check it out!" Listen to the man…

***California Breed* is out now on Frontiers.**
Info: www.californiabreed.com

★LEGEND★

GLENN HUGHES

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BETTER DAYS COMIN'

FROM INTERNATIONAL ROCKSTAR BASSIST TO CASUALTY OF MUSICAL FADS AND BACK, KIP WINGER'S PATH THROUGH THE MUSIC INDUSTRY HAS NEVER BEEN SMOOTH, AS HE TELLS BEN COOPER

Once a pinup for the 80s metal scene, Kip Winger and his band were swept aside when grunge became flavour of the month in the early 1990s. They became poster boys for the perceived ills of the rock music scene, all good looks, lightweight songs and spandex. It was, even on their most obviously popular hits, a totally unfair assault, though Kip is quick to point out that his skills as a writer and arranger were more limited at that time: "How can I put it… the capability of what we are doing now has always been there, but my ability in the early days to actually manifest it wasn't as strong."

The band parted ways on good terms after 1993's unfairly unappreciated *Pull*, a little gem of hard rock with prog undertones. The dream was over, and Kip found himself in the odd situation of being more famous for a misguided perception of who he was than for his talent and hard work.

"But in some ways that was a hidden benefit," he explains. "I moved into the mountains of New Mexico and recalibrated how I approached music, and reinvented myself in 1997 on *This Conversation Seems Like A Dream*."

His first solo album came with little fanfare or promotional support, and the only option available to him was to gig acoustically, just him and his guitar. This different direction revealed a more complex side to the man. He released the richly complex album *Songs From The Ocean Floor* in 2000, but the pull of reuniting Winger was still strong and in 2001 the band came back together for a series of successful tours. Kip credits the ease of the reunion and subsequent tours on the band's enduring friendship, with the main writing team of Kip and guitarist Reb Beach being particularly close. Even better was to come in 2009 with the release of *Karma*, regarded as Winger's strongest album so far – at least, until the release of newest album *Better Days Comin'*.

The bass playing on the album is rich and powerful, with lines that move about harmonically while always offering the solid support needed in rock. Though predominantly a fingerstyle player, Kip isn't afraid of grabbing a pick to achieve the right tone. As he says, "I'll use a pick a lot when it's appropriate; most of the time I use my nails to get some of the attack of a pick but the meat of fingerstyle playing."

"I've gone back to Spector basses," he says. "I've got a couple of handmade NS2s by Stuart. They are the best basses I've ever played. I've used them on the last two records and I'm so glad to be back with them. I string all my basses with D'Addario strings. I go through a Telefunken V72 preamp, and a custom DI box made by Midget Electronics, a company run by my friend Arthur Sloatman. I use the Son of Kong, which gives an amazing tone. Sometimes I'll use a Neve 1272 preamp if I want a bit more presence. I run into an 1176LN original blackface and I also use a Tech21 VT Bass and I blend that in, but I don't use amps in the studio."

There's a surprising moment on the title track where Kip busts out some funky slap chops. "When I was doing session work in New York back in the 80s, I learnrf some slap because it was all the rage," he says. "On 'Better Days Comin'' it's the only bit of slap I can still play! But it works. We wanted a fun song on the album, we have that side to us, and it came together really quickly."

Has the classical training affected the way he approaches bass playing? "Actually I'd say it's the other way round. When I compose classical pieces I write distinct bass riffs. After performances the bass players in the orchestras always comment on how great the bass part is, and that's all influenced by my rock playing."

Given that when jamming ideas with Reb he will predominantly play bass, does he compose the line before recording begins? "I'll lay in a scratch bass part which could serve as the final line, but I always like to let Rod Morgenstein, our drummer, do his thing, because he's such a creative drummer. Then I'll alter the bass-line based on what Rod is doing. I think it's a great way to approach the bass-line: the Beatles used to do that a lot."

So what's Kip's number one tip for aspiring musicians? "Being a good self-editor is huge. Don't deceive yourself into thinking you're better at something than you really are. I think that's a huge skill, and it'll take you miles on the path to success." ■

Info: www.kipwinger.com

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CAPARISON
C2 DEB-E

SATAN'S OWN AXE, OR MERELY A PRETENDER TO THE THRONE? IAN GLASPER SUMMONS THIS DEVILISHLY POINTY DENIZEN OF THE UNDERWORLD...

By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes, and as four-string lumps of wood go, this is about as evil and seductive as it gets. Yes, that's a 'Devil's Tail' headstock, bucking trends and leering skywards, inverted at 14 degrees no less, and while its distinctive look is bound to split opinion, this undoubtedly rocks like a beast (W.A.S.P. fans will know where I'm coming from...). It's very black, very shiny and very pointy – what's not to like? Even the chunky hardware is black chrome, so if darkness is your thing, look no further than this swaggering mofo.

BUILD QUALITY

If you're wondering what DEB stands for, it's 'Dellinger Bass', referencing the rather tasty and also rather pricey premium model that Caparison discontinued last year. Thankfully, their C2 Series makes available all the quality and features of their regular series, but attached to a more wallet-friendly price tag, made possible in part due to lead designer Itaru Kanno not checking each one personally, as he does their more expensive lines. So here you'll find not only the shape but the spirit of the Dellinger resurrected, dangerously scything peg-head and all.

All that said, there's absolutely nothing to make you doubt Caparison's quality control when you get your mitts on this instrument: this is still a beautifully constructed bit of kit. Inspect it all you want, you won't find anything you don't like. Not only has it been precision-assembled in Japan, but – that Marmite headstock aside, of course – it is a masterclass in understated less-is-more aesthetics. Simple, sleek and sexy.

It's also heavy. And I mean reassuringly heavy. Take it from me, you won't be swinging this bass around onstage, because if you misjudged

your swing, you might never get it out of the wall... or the back of your singer's head. It's a tank – a deceptively streamlined tank, I'll give you that – but a tank nonetheless.

There's a classy natural matt finish to the bolt-on maple neck, which comes with unassuming dot inlays, and the silky rosewood fingerboard has a tasteful white binding to finish it off. The neck joint is neater than an OCD sufferer's sock drawer, and there's an attractive cutaway in the back of the body, bifurcating the four neck bolts for no practical reason whatsoever, but it looks sassy. At the other end of the neck you'll find a 39mm synthetic black nut, the Satanic swerve of that headstock backed by 2:2 sealed gear tuning units. The strings are saddled in a Gotoh 201B-4-CK bridge, again dark-tinted – even the springs! – and deliciously decadent and easy to use.

SOUNDS AND PLAYABILITY

The look of this guitar screams 'Metal!' but it lends itself effortlessly to other genres too. Admittedly, it's like a black hole of heavy metal that will suck you into that playing style: despite your best efforts, you will find yourself strangely drawn to downpicking and triplets, but cast that foul plectrum aside for a minute, roll up the bridge pickup volume and you'll soon be rocking some heavy grooves with the fingertips too. Soundwise, the Caparison stretches to slapping and popping, especially if you push the master tone, but its shape and weight aren't

"IT'S A DREAM TO PLAY IF YOU'RE BIG INTO BUSTING OUT ROCK AND METAL JAMS"

especially conducive to that approach.

Those slate slabs doubling for pickups are both humbucking EMGs and mean serious business, so you'll have no problem coaxing a throaty muscular growl from the low end, and finding an equally intense cutting attack at the top. Two volume knobs and a master tone might seem a relatively simple combination of sounds, but don't be deceived into thinking this will restrict the tones available: the controls are both sensitive and broad of range. And besides, we all know what bassists do when they have too many knobs to twiddle – turn them all up and leave them up.

There are 24 jumbo frets at your disposal across the 34" scale neck, and the hand-finished fingerboard is very tactile: it naturally promotes increasingly ambitious scales and runs as you attempt to tame this belligerent beast. I dropped the action of the review model a tad and found that fingering the neck was like skating on a frozen lake, with not a whisper of fret rattle to grate on the nerves.

The modest cutaway means that the nethermost regions of the neck aren't quite as accessible as they could be, but why the hell would you

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

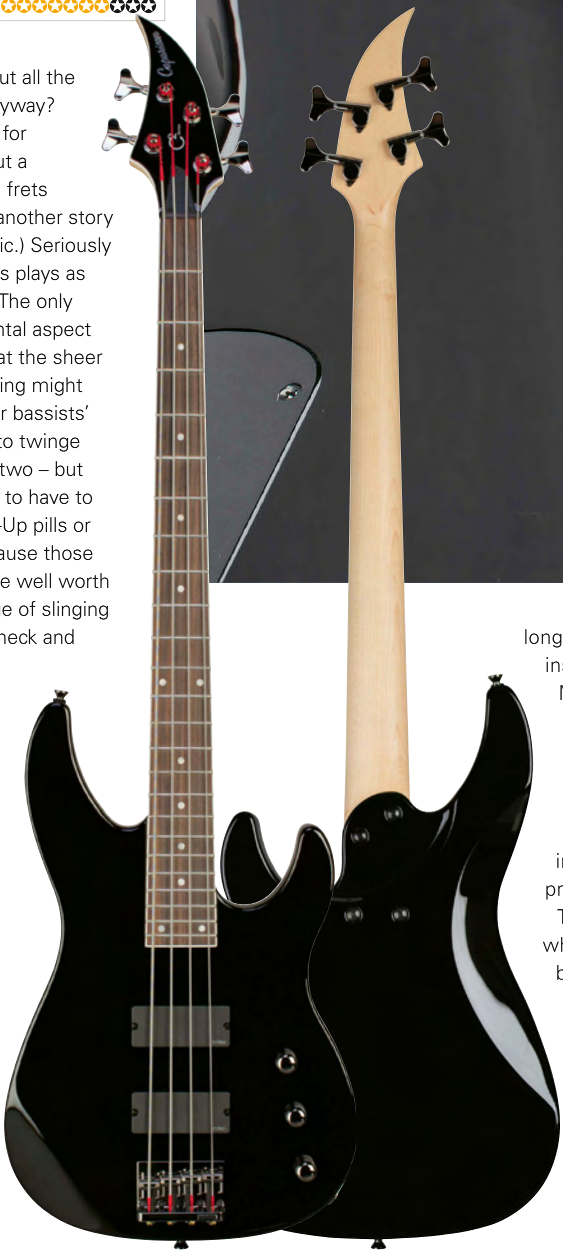
PRICE | £979
MADE IN | Japan
BODY | Mahogany
FINISH | Black gloss
NECK | Maple
FRETS | 24
SCALE | 34"
FINGERBOARD | Rosewood
PICKUPS | 2 EMG-35DCs
CONTROLS | 2 master volume, master tone

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Distinctive design, great tones, rock-solid build
MINUS | An acquired taste headstock for sure, and the weight of the bass might be offputting for some
OVERALL | Beautifully realised and finished, this bass might not have the widest range of tones, but those that it does have are magnificent

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★★★★★☆
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★★★★☆☆
VALUE	★★★★★★★☆☆☆



be messing about all the way up there anyway? (I'm still waiting for them to bring out a bass with seven frets on it, but that's another story for another comic.) Seriously though, this bass plays as fine as you like. The only slightly detrimental aspect to factor in is that the sheer weight of the thing might make us skinnier bassists' shoulders start to twinge after an hour or two – but we're just going to have to take some Man-Up pills or something, because those tired muscles are well worth it for the privilege of slinging this round your neck and letting fly.

The body is pleasantly chamfered for comfort on the near side, skilfully contoured against your body, but left rather blocky against the forearm, so depending upon your playing style you might need to develop a few callouses for long hauls. It's definitely an instrument to carve out Megadeth licks on rather than, say, Level 42 grooves, but I think Caparison are more than aware of which corner of the market they're happily painting themselves into, given that demonic stock profile.

The guitar hangs beautifully when the player is standing up, but it is cut in such a way that it sits on you rather than into you when you're seated with it on your lap. You may find this somewhat frustrating if you spend too long with it in front of your PC reading tab. No matter, you'll just have to stand back up again, won't you? It's character-building, so I'm told.

CONCLUSION

This is a beautiful guitar, boasting a modern aesthetic that's firmly pitched at a certain type of player, and it's a dream to play if you're big into busting out rock and metal jams. It also comes with a lovely Reunion Blues AERO gig bag that's so luxurious you'll want to be buried in it – all red padded faux-velvet, reinforced to the nines, with a Velcro neck strap to keep this bloodsucker locked down tight during the daylight hours. Once it's cast its spell on you though, you'll be counting down the hours 'til nightfall when you can pit your wits against it all over again.

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DINGWALL
Super P

FANNED FRETS: LOVE THEM OR HATE THEM, THEY'RE HERE TO STAY. KEV SANDERS GIVES HIS FINGERS A WORKOUT WITH DINGWALL'S LATEST BEAUTY

Although they've been around for over 15 years, playing a Dingwall bass was for a long time a bit of a minority sport. The problem was those trademark fanned frets, an idea first patented by luthier Ralph Novak in 1989. It always seemed like an interesting idea, but some thought that they represented a solution to a problem that didn't really exist. The concept behind the fanned frets is that by positioning an instrument's nut and bridge saddles at opposite angles, what you're doing in effect is giving each string its own scale length; longer for the low strings and shorter for the higher. This means that each string can be set to its optimum tension when tuned to pitch – and that means a better sounding bass.

It's not surprising that it's taken some time for the idea to gain momentum, but in the last few years more and more high-profile bass players – Lee Sklar and last year's *BGM* cover star Dave Swift among them – have started using Dingwalls. Slowly, the bass-playing community has started to sit up and take notice. Let's give this one a shot...

BUILD QUALITY

Everything about this bass is super-high-quality, starting with the timbers. The Precision-shaped body is made from light, even-grained swamp ash with a glossy, translucent off-white finish – it's flawless. The slim neck is pale maple, again of the very best quality and finished to a soft satin sheen. Topping the neck is a birdseye maple fretboard. This is quite an unusual choice for a fingerboard (although some Stingrays have it), but it looks stunning and the colour perfectly matches that of the neck, with the change in grain pattern one of the few clues that the fretboard is in fact a separate piece of timber.

Dingwalls were always beautifully made and it's good to see that, despite the increased popularity and demand for these basses, they've maintained the high standards that they set themselves right from the beginning. The four-bolt neck join is a good example of this: perfectly executed with the hex-screws countersunk and positioned in a way that mirrors the angled frets, bridge and nut.

The overwound neodymium pickups are exclusive to Dingwall and comprise a PP in neck position and an FD3 at the bridge. The chunky bridge is also a lovely piece of design, an object lesson in form and function, with easy adjustment for action and string length and, like the pickups, is custom-made. The rest of the fixtures and fittings, like the traditional black/white/black scratchplate and cloverleaf Hipshot HB6 tuners, all add to the understated retro vibe, although a nod to modernity is the D-Tuner on the E string.

SOUNDS AND PLAYABILITY

The controls on this bass are worth explaining in detail. This is an elegant, versatile system which quickly allows you to set the exact tone that you want. Firstly, like more and more top-end basses these

"AS FOR THE FANNED FRETS? THE EVENNESS OF THE STRING TENSION UNDER YOUR FINGERS AND THE QUALITY AND FOCUS OF THE BOTTOM END ARE TESTAMENT TO THE FACT THAT THIS SYSTEM WORKS"

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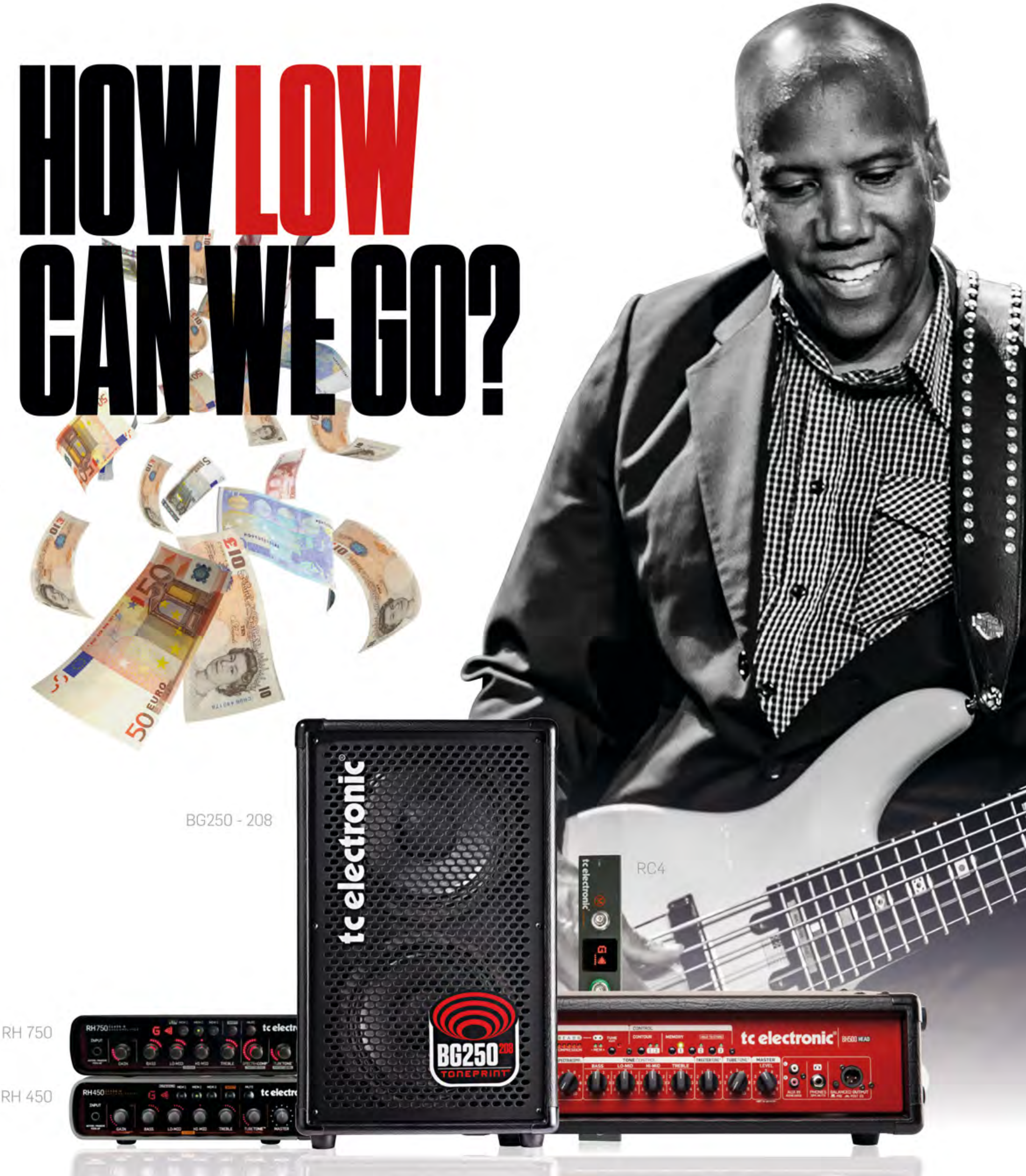

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days, it's passive, so there are no batteries or EQ boost, but the quality of the tonewoods, construction and electronics mean that there's absolutely no need for them. The front control is volume and the back a master tone. Between these is the notched pickup selector. In its first position, fully clockwise, this selects the front pickup alone; one click back is the front plus the back pickup in series, then in parallel; and finally, the back pickup on its own.

I can't overstate just how much versatility this gives you, although you'll soon find your favourite tones, two of mine being the front pickup with the back in series and the back pickup alone. The latter gives you an awesome dark, woody bark, like a priceless vintage Jazz heard through big studio monitors. This is what makes this bass such a great instrument for the recording bassist: it has all of those classic Precision and Jazz tones, but they've been brought bang up to date, with a weight to the low end that was never there on those old 60s instruments.

As for the fanned frets? The

evenness of the string tension under your fingers and the quality and focus of the bottom end are testament to the fact that this system works. It makes a real difference, particularly when you're using the D-Tuner to extend the low range. No complaints here.

CONCLUSION

The Super P design is in part the result of the success of Dingwall's original P-Bass. That instrument, with its single pickup plus passive volume and tone control, was appreciated for its common-sense layout, quality feel and (perhaps most of all) its fantastic tone. The P/J takes that basic premise, but adds to it the versatility of a split-coil pickup in the bridge position.

This is first and foremost a player's instrument. I don't think it's coincidental that the bassists who first recognised Dingwall's potential were not soloists or technique specialists, but session guys who play and record bass day in, day out. These people need a versatile instrument that will deliver the finest quality sound, be comfortable to play and remain straightforward to use. The Dingwall Super P ticks all those boxes, and you can expect to see a lot more of them around in the future.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | £2750
BODY | 2 piece swamp ash
NECK | 5 piece maple
FINGERBOARD | Birdseye maple
CONTROLS | Passive, volume, pickup select, tone
SCRATCHPLATES | Black/white/black
TUNERS | Hipshot HB6
PICKUPS | Dingwall PP and FD3
CASE/GIG BAG INCLUDED? | Hard case included

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Dare to be different. The fanned fret system takes a little time to get used to, but the payback is a quality to the low end which you'll soon wonder how you ever did without
MINUS | Not sure about the Star Trek logo string tree, or the black plastic control knobs
OVERALL | Top-notch build quality and hardware: a fantastic bass that makes some other instruments around this price seem positively old fashioned

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★★★★★☆
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★★★★★☆☆

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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

PRICE | €4950 (approx £4040)
MADE IN | The Netherlands
BODY | Pommele mahogany, figured Dutch walnut top
NECK | Bigleaf maple
NECK JOIN | Set neck (bolt-on or neck-thru available on request)
FINGERBOARD | Calamander
FRETS | 24
PICKUPS | Rikkers Switchbuckers, Graphtech Ghost piezosaddles
PREAMP | Aguilar OBP3
CONTROLS | Three-band cut/boost, Rikkers piezobuffer
TUNERS | Gotoh Resolites
WEIGHT | 4.6kg
CASE OR GIGBAG INCLUDED? | Flightcase with leather strap and set-up tools included

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | A top-of-the-line professional instrument in every possible way
MINUS | Range of tone options may be over-the-top for some players
OVERALL | An utterly amazing bass that easily competes with others at twice its price

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	10/10 stars
SOUND QUALITY	10/10 stars
VALUE	9/10 stars

CONTACT DETAILS

Rikkers
www.rikkersguitars.com

When the courier delivered this bass to *BGM's* command bunker, we wondered why Rikkers had sent it in a massive flight case the size of a small blue whale. On opening it up, it was obvious why: this Hollowline bass is a thing of pure, sculpted beauty. The finish looks durable, but bump or scratch it on the furniture after a few glasses of sherry and you will pass out in despair. This is the most strokable bass we've seen in ages, and with a price tag as eye-watering as this one, let's hope its quality is worth the courier's spinal osteopathy fees.

BUILD QUALITY

The nitrocellulose lacquer and the precision of the lutherie on offer here make this bass look like a neck-thru model rather than a set-neck. That's how seamless the joins are between the components. This attention to detail extends to the rest of the bass, from the silky neck and buffed fret-ends, via the hardware and super-chunky controls to details such as the '30th Anniversary' plaque inset into the fretboard. The walnut top oozes old-school class – a bit like the surface of the desk in Winston Churchill's War Room – and the battery and electronics compartments fit with atomic accuracy. All this quality comes at a price, of course, and not just a fiscal one: the Hollowline weighs around 4.6kg, or the best part of a stone to you imperialists. It would have been even heavier if the body hadn't been hollowed out beneath that super-snooty walnut surface. Which brings us neatly to...

SOUNDS AND PLAYABILITY

The Hollowline's neck is a pleasure to play, as indeed it should be at this price. Your fingers glide up and down it, helped along by a slim profile that is almost flat for most of the rear surface. Access to the 24th fret is easy on the higher three strings, although you'll struggle on the E and B strings thanks to that narwhal-shaped single cut body. However, that extra chunk of wood does help to give this bass one of its most striking characteristics – its sustain. Pluck a note and it resonates deeply and long, thanks presumably to those hidden, hollowed-out spaces.

Had Rikkers focused primarily on the body and neck, the Hollowline would still have been a splendid bass, but dig a little deeper to the tone circuit and controls and there's a whole other story to be told. The Aguilar preamp that gives this active bass its power is just one of the available options, regulated via three controls, two stacked. The first (from the pickups downward) is the master volume, with an outer ring for pickup balance. The second is treble (pot) and bass (ring); accessing both the top and bottom ends via a single control might seem odd at first, but in fact it should save your fingers a bit of mileage, at least in theory. Next is the mid control, with a pull function for a boost at 500Hz. These operate much as you'd expect, although the surge of bass and mid when you dial those controls fully up is genuinely not to be taken for granted.

Rikkers hasn't stopped there, with the fourth control (with centre detent, like the others) a stacked pot with a ring for passive tone and a central pot controlling the Hollowline's secret weapon – the piezo pickups in the bridge. Roll off the other pots and whack up the piezo signal and you'll be rewarded with the sweetest tone we've heard in some time. It's hard to describe – words like woody, nutty and synthy all come to mind – so you really need to give the Hollowline a shot yourself.

Rikkers might be forgiven for leaving the tone options there, but no: in addition to active, passive and piezo options, they've also applied Switchbucker pickups to the Hollowline, each of which features two tiny switches to control the coil options. They could have been a touch bigger for my liking; each one is only a few millimetres long, presumably in order not to detract from the aesthetics. On each pickup, push them towards each other and you get a humbucker configuration; to the left or right, and it's left and right coil; and apart from each other, it's a parallel-coil option. The differences in tone are marked in each case.

For me, there are way too many tone options. I'm no Luddite when it comes to bass technology, but consider the number of combinations you have to play with. In each mode – especially active and piezo – you have a wide tone range accessible thanks to the EQ. Even the passive tone control gives you plenty of options. Add the many switchable configurations in the pickups and it'll take you months, maybe years, to analyse every conceivable tone – and that's before you work your way through fingerstyle, pick and thumb, or even fiddle with your amp. The Hollowline is utterly amazing in every way, let us be clear about that, but sometimes enough is enough, right?

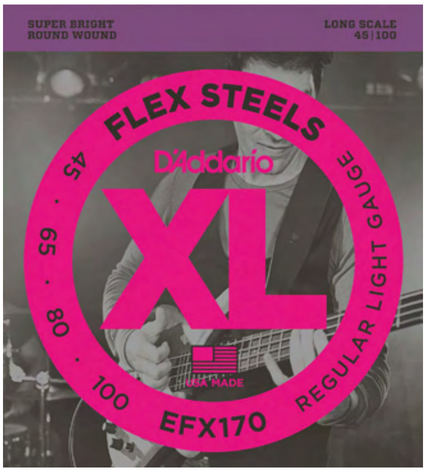
CONCLUSION

After two years editing this hallowed magazine, I confess that I've become infatuated with the idea that small, lightweight bass bodies are beautiful and that simple circuits are divine. I've reviewed – and commissioned reviews of – so many heavy, overcomplicated, high-priced basses that only a small number of professionals will ever play, let alone acquire, that the idea of lighter, more affordable, mid-spec instruments has begun to feel like the way forward.

However, I'm delighted to have my expectations overturned by this stunning example of bass craftsmanship. The key point for me is that at "only" £4000 (I know, but bear with me) the Hollowline comes in at around half the price of several, equally amazing bass brands that I could name but won't, because they too deserve their reputation. Four grand is a lot of money, but when you come across a bass that costs twice as much and plays more or less the same, with more or less identical tone options, suddenly you gain a sense of perspective. Great job Rikkers – let's hope we see more of your basses soon.

REVIEWS ROUND-UP

JOEL MCIVER GATHERS UP THREE VERY DIFFERENT BASS PRODUCTS AIMED SQUARELY AT YOUR WALLET. ARE THEY WORTH THE WEDGE?



D'ADDARIO FLEXSTEELS BASS STRINGS PRICE £31.49

There are tons of bass strings around at this price point these days. What's a humble bass player to do? Well, you could do worse than investigate D'Addario's new FlexSteels, which they claim (their words) possess "the unique combination of flexible feel coupled with a coveted deep, round tone and just the right amount of punch and bite that's optimised for – but not limited to – slap and fingerstyle playing". With a press release like that, we have to give them a shot, and once we've got our battered old set of strings off the old Stingray 5 that's been hanging around the office since 1923 or thereabouts, the difference is genuinely noticeable. We won't know about the long string life which D'Addario claims these strings enjoy until we've gigged them, James Jamerson-style, for six months or so, but we'll happily agree that they're sensitive and consistent, with a splendid deep tone with plenty of punch. FlexSteels are available for four, five and six-string basses and varying gauges including our reviewer's favourite, Regular Light Top/Medium Bottom, or 45 to 105 in old money.

www.daddario.com

BGM Rating Out Of 10: 8

ELECTRO-HARMONIX CRYING BASS PRICE £59

EHX and their ace products always raise an eyebrow at *BGM* Towers, and the latest 'Next Step' iteration of their Crying Bass wah/fuzz pedal has been much appreciated during our testing process, not least because there appear not to be any moving parts that singers, guitarists and other band pondlife can step on and break. You rock this beast backward and forward in its entirety, rather than it being a hinged pedal/base affair, which is cool for starters, but where the Crying Bass pedal really steps up is with its low-pass filter, designed to retain low end. There's also a fuzz effect that you can dial in for that vintage, blown-cabinet sound, or if you want to sound like the late Cliff Burton of Metallica. Whack the fuzz right up and you have a truly monstrous sound straight from the drawer marked 'Lemmy', with the obvious, decades-long sustain that goes along with it. For around £60, this is a seriously good value addition to your pedalboard – to which, by the way, the Crying Bass can be affixed with the addition of a low-cost base and Velcro strap for travelling.

www.ehx.com

BGM Rating Out Of 10: 9

RADIAL ENGINEERING FIREFLY TUBE DIRECT BOX PRICE $599.99 (APPROX £356)

This two-channel DI box – with a nice warm valve for that unmistakable sound – is a serious piece of kit, aimed both at the recording and touring musician: the latter will be pleased to learn that it's built like a tank. Take that, baggage handlers! What's more, none other than Nathan East has chosen it as his DI box of choice, which inevitably makes it more attractive in our world. Connect it to your computer or amp via the standard jack or XLR output and, assuming that you've allowed the valve to warm up, you'll notice a definite feeling of warmth in the sound, although it doesn't intrude as the box is not designed to do so. Instead, accuracy, consistency and reliability are evidently what the Firefly's designers were aiming for, and in our test we couldn't fault it. Sure, that pricetag puts it some way above other direct boxes which we could name, but you're paying for quality here. The additional JR-2 stompbox allows you to mute and switch between channels. Good job all round, we say.

www.radialeng.com

BGM Rating Out Of 10: 8

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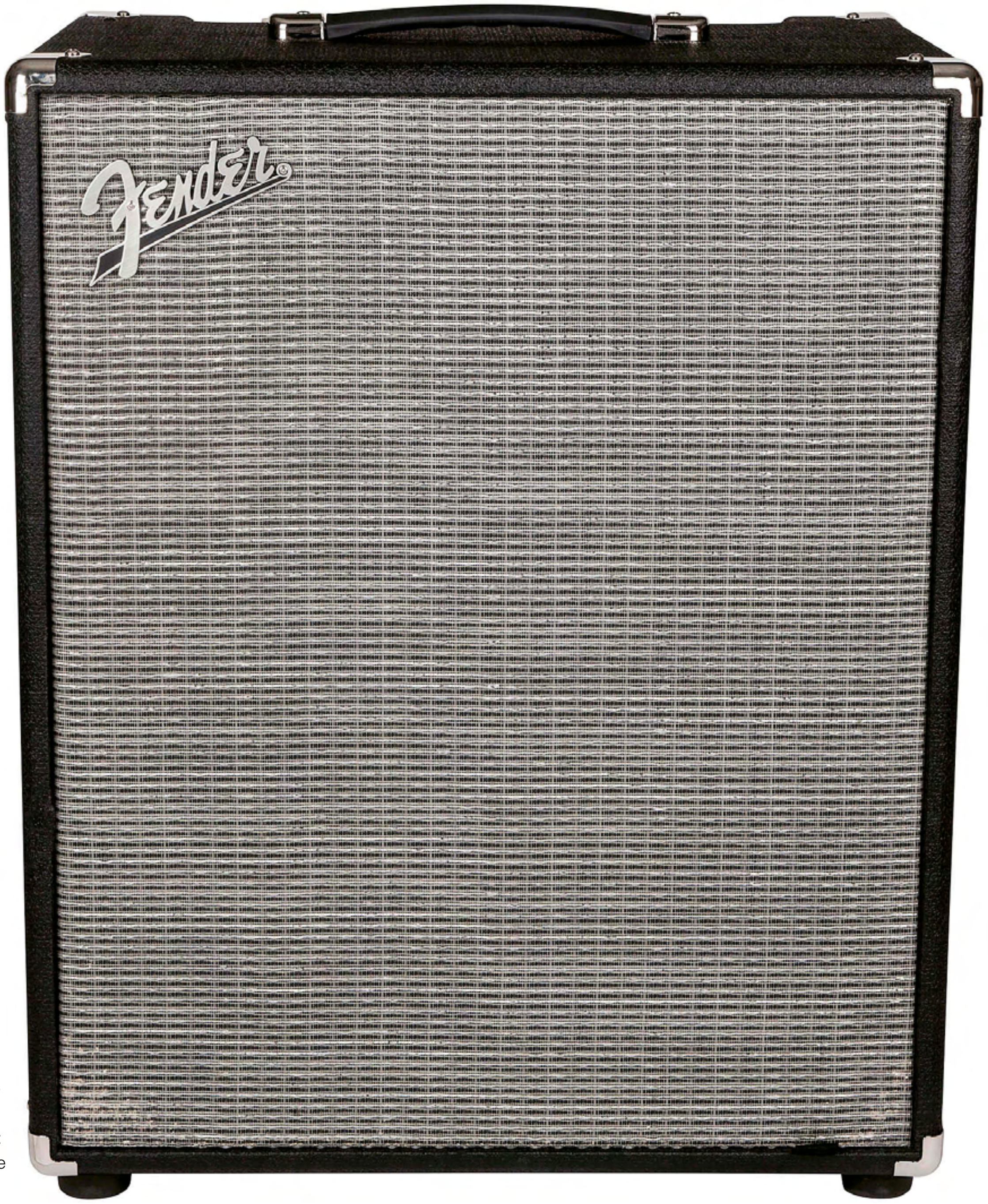
FENDER
Rumble 100 and 500

DUFF BATTYE PUTS TWO OF FENDER'S NEW RUMBLE COMBO SERIES TO THE TEST. WILL THEY MAKE THE EARTH MOVE FOR HIM?



The 2014 NAMM trade show in California saw guitar and amp giant Fender launch their Rumble series of bass amps. Specifically designed as a lightweight portable amp range, they've included combos with 500, 200, 100, 40, 25 and 15-watt outputs, as well as separate Rumble 500 and 200 heads and 410 and 115 cabinets. This month we're testing the Rumble 500 and Rumble 100 combos. Will the range stack up against the competition?

BUILD QUALITY

As you'd expect from Fender, the build quality of the two amps on test is very high. The combos both feature a lovely silver logoed front grill, a thing of beauty. This can be removed, which is a bit of a faff, but it does give the speaker nerds among us a different option. In line with the classic feel of the silver grill, the control buttons are a tasty ivory colour and are both chunky and robust. Both the 500 and 100 feature the same basic controls – input, gain and master, and four tonal controls – bass, low-mid, high-mid and treble. There's a range of effects: bright, contour and vintage 'voicing palette' settings

and an inbuilt overdrive with an on/off button plus drive and level controls. On the back of the units, both have an effect loop, line out and inputs for headphones, optional footswitch and aux in, but the 500 also features an external speaker output and horn tweeter.

In terms of build, Fender has really nailed the key to a portable amp combo – the weight. When these combos first arrived I assumed they had sent the wrong models, as they are so light. The Rumble 100 comes in at only 22lb with the Rumble 500 not much more at 36lb. Gone are the backbreaking days of lugging amps up and down stairs. Both combos have enough capability sound-wise for most situations, with the added benefit of being easily movable.

"THESE ARE GOOD AMPS, BUT HAD THEY BEEN SIMPLER, THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN GREAT ONES"

SOUNDS AND PLAYABILITY

The smaller Rumble's 100 watts of power are channelled through a 12" Fender Eminence speaker. For a lightweight amp it has a lot of power, certainly enough for a small gig or practice situation. The signal remains clear as you push up both gain and master controls. The four tonal options tangibly affect the sound, which is a relief as a shortcoming of many small combos is their lack of tonal options. The speaker did struggle when bass and master were touching max: not a problem encountered by its bigger brother, which – allowing two 10" Eminence speakers with the option of feeding an external speaker – steps up without losing definition. This amp is loud, and certainly suitable for most gigging situations.

Standard tonal controls aside, the added extra effects are slightly disappointing: the 'vintage sounds' button adds warm fuzz to the amp, in line with its classic styling, but the bright option seems to remove much of the bass oomph and the contour option adds little but flattens the standard sound. Of course, it's a moot point whether internal overdrive/distortion effects ever really offer anything significant, but the Rumble series will do little to undo that argument. This is a shame as the standard sound of the amp is so strong and clear.

CONCLUSION

Fender have set out to produce a portable, lightweight, powerful series of bass amps. The weight, clean sounds and tonal options of the Rumble 100 and Rumble 500 suggest that they have succeeded with ease. However, for some reason they have felt the need to include some fairly redundant effect options. These are good amps, but had they been simpler, they might have been great ones.

CONTACT DETAILS

Fender
www.fender.com

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

FENDER RUMBLE 100
PRICE | £298.80
POWER | 100 watts
SPEAKER | 12" Eminence, removable grill
EQ | Four-band
EFFECTS | Bright, Contour and Vintage controls; Overdrive circuit with on/off, drive and level
FEATURES | Effects loop ¼" send and return
INPUTS | ⅛" aux input, optional footswitch input
OUTPUT | ⅛" headphones out
WEIGHT | 22lb

RUMBLE 500
PRICE | £598.80
POWER | 500 watts
SPEAKERS | 2x 10" Eminence, removable grill
EQ | Four-band
EFFECTS | Bright, Contour and Vintage controls; Overdrive circuit with on/off, drive and level
FEATURES | Effects loop ¼" send and return
INPUTS | ⅛" aux input, optional footswitch input
OUTPUTS ⅛" phones out, external speaker output with ground lift
WEIGHT | 36lb

WHAT WE THINK

PLUS | Fender name and build quality, incredibly lightweight, clean sound
MINUS | Unnecessary redundant features, a touch overpriced
OVERALL | If you like your brand names and classic combos that pack a punch, the Rumble series is for you. Expect to pay for the privilege and largely bypass the inbuilt effects

BGM RATING

RUMBLE 100

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★★★★☆☆
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★★☆☆☆☆
VALUE	★★★★★★★★☆☆

BGM RATING

RUMBLE 100
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★★★★☆☆
SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆
VALUE ★★★★★★★★☆☆

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Chris has amassed a staggering amount of insightful, interesting and sometimes irrelevant information on bass guitar equipment during his career as a professional bassist. So we continue to push electronics and bass amps under his nose and make him report to us on his favourites.

CHRIS HANBY @CHanbyEFX

AMPEG V4-B

CHRIS DOFFS HIS HAT TO AMPEG'S VENERABLE V4-B

After Ampeg's successful launch of the SVT in 1969, the world looked to be a changed place as far as we bassists were concerned. No longer did we strive for volume, as 300 watts seemed ample for the larger rock venues that the SVT was designed for. It was strange, however, that Ampeg decided to launch another bass amplifier only two years later – and stranger still that it was only 100 watts.

Ampeg launched the V range in 1969, which included the V4 guitar amp. Bass players soon started to adopt the V4, enjoying its power and tone. Ampeg were quick to spot this and launched the V4-B in 1971. It was almost identical to the V4, the only major difference being the removal of the reverb unit. The V4 used a sealed 4x12 cab that was very effective for bassists. For the bass version, Ampeg offered a matching V4-B cabinet that featured a folded cabinet design and two 15" Altec Lansing 421A speakers. The result sounded huge, with fabulous low end. Unfortunately the low end projected several metres away from the cab, leaving the player needing more volume when standing next to it. To overcome this problem, it was often paired with a second 4x15 or 2x12 cabinet as a monitor, while the V4-B cab catered for the audience.

The V4-B design used four 7027A valves for its power section and two 12AX7s – a 6K11 and a 12DW7 – for the gain stage. This gave the amp 100 watts, although this figure underrates the output as it pumps out over 120 watts. The front panel features dual inputs, each with their own volume control. Alongside are Treble, Mid and Bass controls. Above the tone controls are three black rocker switches – ultra high, ultra low and a mid shift selector switch – offering three frequency settings at 300Hz, 800-1000Hz and 2500-3000Hz. The mid pot boosts and cuts above and below the selected frequency. The original V4-B was adorned with silver knobs and black switches, but the entire V range had a facelift in the mid-70s, adding white rocker switches and black knobs.

I am lucky enough to own an original mid-70s V4-B, so I can give you some insight into the rich tone of this amp. Next to modern-day amps, the V4-B is bulky. It's 68cm wide so it hangs off the edge of most cabinets, and it weighs in at a whopping 25kg. Try lifting that up a few flights of stairs on a gig! However, plug it in and you immediately see what all the fuss is about: pure, creamy rock tone pours from this thing. For an amp rated at 100 watts it's seriously loud and can more than keep up with my 500-watt digital amp. The sound is punchy and defined; the three mid settings all offer different, but unmistakably Ampeg, tones. Mine has become my go-to amp for recording. At low volume it provides thick tube oomph, and on cranking the volume you enter grind heaven. I actually prefer the recorded sound of my V4-B to any SVT I've tried.

The V4-B was re-launched in 1995, adding an 'H' to its name. The V4-BH had a redesigned preamp using two 12AX7s, two 12AU7s and four 6L6s. This reissue also included a few additions such as dedicated gain and presence controls, a five-position selector for the mid shift and an XLR output. The chassis was also narrower than the original in keeping with the Ampeg range at the time.

Ampeg reissued the V4-B in 2013 as well, a testament to the amp's prolonged popularity. This model uses two 12AX7s in the preamp and four 6L6GC tubes for power. It has the gain control of the 90s reissue and also the balanced XLR out. Instead of two identical inputs, it had a 15dB cut for active basses. It's also slightly smaller and a lot lighter than the 70s version.

While most bassists regard the SVT as Ampeg's greatest achievement, the V4-B should receive due recognition. It offers bass players a viable option without having to spend a fortune on an SVT. Some say that the V4-B is responsible for Ampeg's increased popularity in the 70s, and it certainly creates the sound of that era. Anyone looking for authentic rock tone should definitely give the V4-B a try.

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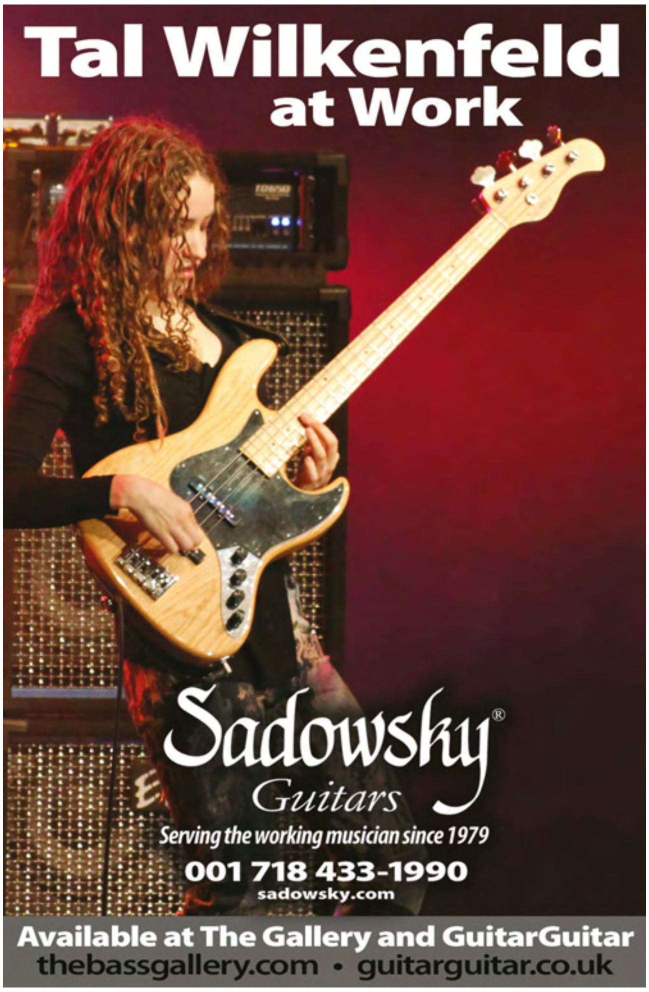
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THE JAZZ BASSIST

RUTH GOLLER

Jazz guru Ruth considers a wealth of playing options

I recently had the pleasure of spending time around a brilliant young double bass player called Petter Eldh. He's from Sweden, but lives in Berlin. I knew his playing from the album *Confirmation* with Django Bates' Beloved trio, and had seen him perform a couple of times, but it was great to get to know the person behind the instrument, and exchange bass chat, as well as hearing some of his own music, which is equally amazing. One of his tunes that I particularly like is called 'Love Declared, Disaster Averted'. Petter's bass playing really speaks to me because we have a similar musical background, which is not strictly jazz: it's also punk, hardcore and hip-hop. His tone on the double bass makes me think of the same energy that I get from hardcore: it's strong, punchy and dirty, yet has a certain warmth to it. On top of that, I really value his musicianship in a band context: he is so supportive, yet inventive at the same time, and his ability to play freely within a strict form is astonishing. In fact, that's why Django's Beloved trio stands out from so many other bands: they blur improvisation and complex written material in such a smooth way that, as a listener, you don't know which of the two you're hearing. I recommend getting that album: its second track is called 'We Are Not Lost' and is a perfect example of what I am talking about. The tune basically consists of various hits over a long form, and they stick to it all the way through while playing freely over the top and delivering beautiful improvisations. I asked Petter how he manages to internalise long lines like that without getting lost, and he said that after they had rehearsed a particular line, they kept singing it in their heads afterwards – an interesting solution to a common problem.

soundcloud.com/ruth-goller

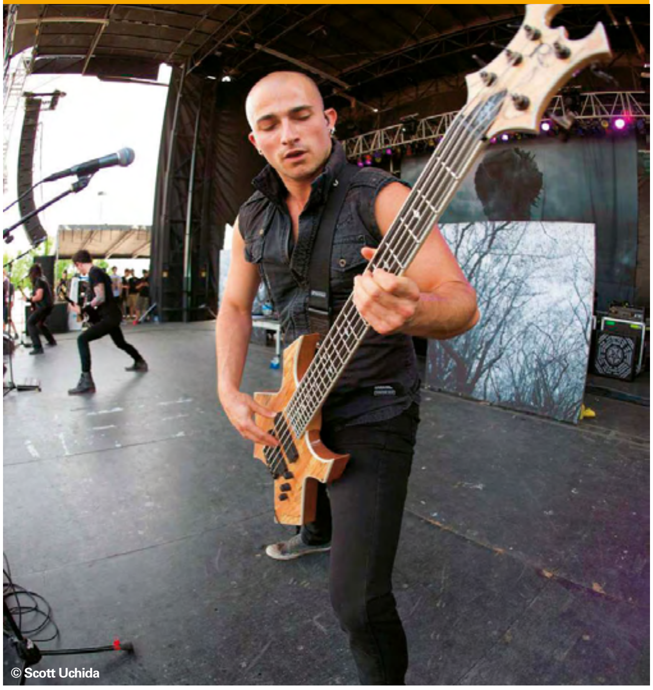
THE METALHEAD

PAOLO GREGOLETTO

Trivium's bassist ruminates on the nature of differing audiences

In America we have what is now dubbed the 'Loudest Month', or something like that. I believe it has to do with Monster Energy or some sort of caffeinated beverage. These are not like the Mayhem or Ozzfest-style tours in midsummer, but more akin to European festivals: the settings and camping are similar, although the line-ups are not. Think radio-rock driven with a few metal bands and maybe even a classic band. Now, for the past month we've been on tour with Danish rock'n'rollers Volbeat, a surprisingly great fit for us. In Europe they pack out arenas, and here in America they are one of the biggest things to happen to active rock radio in a long time – and rightfully so. They are a unique band that mixes some great elements: 1950s-style rockabilly (think Elvis or Johnny Cash) with the power of 'Black Album' Metallica and some seriously loud stage volume, with maybe even a dash of Motörhead and the Misfits for good measure. I always find it amazing that culture can cross not only borders, but also oceans, through music. The amount of classic Americana music that can be found in Volbeat's sound is awesome. I asked Michael Poulsen, their singer, where they came up with this mix of influences, and he simply said that his parents played 50s music all the time when he was young, and it stuck. So how do we fit with them, I hear you say? Well, that's a very good question. We've been very mindful of the audience we would encounter on this tour, including the weekend festivals that cater to a more mainstream rock audience. Let's say that 60 to 70 per cent of the audience doesn't know us, and that we have one shot at making a great first impression. We've learned from years and years of supporting tours with different types of bands what works and what doesn't, and we know that we have to tailor our set to the crowd. I'm old enough to say that as a younger man, I would have considered this selling out. Yes, we could come out in front of a Volbeat audience and bash them with the heaviest numbers from the six albums we've made at this point – who knows, many of them might find that they really liked those tunes. But is it worth the risk of turning away a potential new fan to prove a point to yourself? I believe the answer is a definite no.

www.trivium.org



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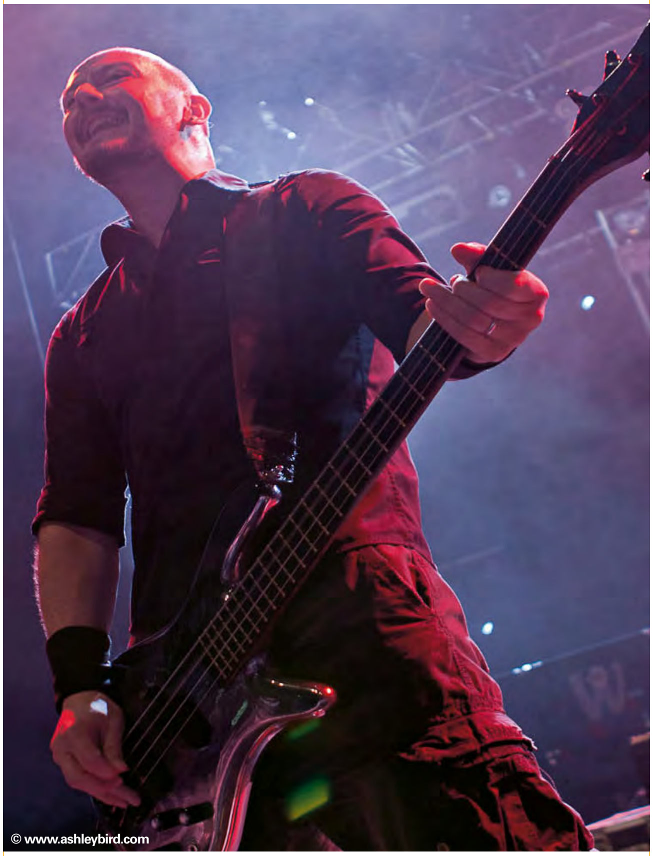
THE ALTERNATIVE ROCKER

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

Therapy? bassist Mike breathes a sigh of relief



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I'm writing this on the eve of finishing up the tracking of our new album, and what a great session it's been. We'd thankfully been well prepped this time, having done some extensive rehearsal and demoing, and we even had the guide bass/guitar/vocals/click all recorded and mapped out in a prior session. It's been a hectic 14 days, but as we were coming off the back of a short tour, that energy and stamina (not to mention the callouses) served us well. We took the standard route of tracking the drums first and then bass before moving onto the guitars and vocals. The bass recording was a bit of a revelation, especially as we were working with a new producer who had a clear idea of how to get my bass tone down. We decided not to go for the obvious options. Sure, a Vintage P-Bass into a good valve head is normally a safe bet, but we literally tried every guitar, amp and preamp configuration for reference and I'm pleased to say we've ended up with one of the best recording tones I've had to date. Tuning-wise, we moved it around a bit: there are tunes in D standard, C standard and drop A#, which meant that there was a lot of opportunity to transpose the parts in order to take full advantage of the extended range. Bass-wise, we also tried out some interesting texture stuff: it's never a pretty sight to see someone 'playing' a bass with a drumstick instead of a pick, but the results were sonically marvellous. We didn't spend too long tweaking either: most takes were full run-throughs, with an option to go back and patch up any clangers or tighten up any timing issues. It wasn't all plain sailing, though: there was a major panic when we realised one of the basses had an intonation problem on certain frets. There wasn't really a logical way to remedy it, so I tweaked the part a bit and played the same note on a different position on the neck. Thankfully, that sat better with the relevant guitar part. The mix starts soon, so I'm really looking forward to getting into that next.
www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

THE EXTENDED-RANGE SPECIALIST

STEWART MCKINSEY

Ten-string-wielding ERB monster Stew gets theoretical

In our ongoing examination of the ERB paradigm, let's look it from another place: theory. Do you need to know music theory to be a great artist? Let's try and look at this from both sides. Is there a connection between artistry and education? Is one an impediment to the other or are they linked symbiotically? Certainly there have been great musicians who did not know theory. The arguments I most often hear against learning are that it either takes too much time and effort, or that it will actually change the way one plays. If you're going to be a solo artist and you have no plans to work with other musicians, that's fine, but what if you choose to play in a band, who present you with sheet music or chord charts, or call out changes as they're playing? In that case, you may want to consider getting some of the basics of the shared language. Does this mean one must learn theory? Of course not, but there are benefits to having the knowledge. I am simply asking you once again to think about what it is you do and what it is you want to do. If the goal is to continue challenging ourselves, what is the best way to go about it? Rather than feed you my opinions, I hope you develop your voice as you develop your own paradigm. Find out what the musicians and artists you admire have chosen and why. Do those choices line up with yours? Explore both sides and see what feels best to you. Remember, you will face critics no matter what you decide; I suggest you know why you have made the choices you have for the day the challenges you face are from others asking you 'Why?'
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10997 - G&L Tribute SB2 4-String, Metallic Black

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12722 - Gibson Les Paul Bass, Heritage Cherry S/Brst
10074 - Gretsch G6073 Electrotone Bass, Burgundy
12218 - Hofner HCT Violin Bass Guitar in Blue
12188 - Hofner Violin Bass Ignition Sunburst

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6780 - Levin LB400, Redburst

LODESTONE

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8079 - Lodestone Primal Instinct P Bass, Green
8080 - Lodestone Primal Instinct Pbass Sunburst
8081 - Lodestone Primal Pro in Chignal Blue
8082 - Lodestone Primal Pro 4, Tobacco Sunburst
4175 - Marleaux B Votan 4, Black

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8250 - Musicman Sterling 4 String Bass, Blue
8997 - Musicman Sterling SB14 Bass, Sunburst

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10962 - Overwater Inspiration 4, Blue Burst
9867 - Overwater Inspiration Jazz PJ 4 String
10102 - Overwater J Series Deluxe 4, Natural
7890 - Rickenbacker 4003, Jetglo
13012 - Rickenbacker 4003, Walnut
12405 - Spector Bass Performer 4 String, Black
11197 - Spector Bass Performer 4, Red

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9072 - Squier Vintage Modified 70's Jazz, Nat
4417 - Steinberger Spirit XT2 4 String Bass
13051 - Tobias Toby Deluxe IV Bass, Trans Amber
13053 - Tobias Toby Deluxe IV Bass, Trans Red
9428 - Tobias Toby Standard IV Bass Guitar, White
13048 - Tobias Toby Standard IV Bass, Ebony
6446 - Westcoast BG4 Neck Thru Body, Brown
8437 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Trans Red

YAMAHA

10120 - Yamaha BB1024X 4 String, Caramel Brown
4649 - Yamaha BB2024X, Vintage White
6953 - Yamaha BB424, Vintage White
5634 - Yamaha BB714BS Billy Sheehan, Lava Red
9000 - Yamaha RBX170
10314 - Yamaha RBX170EW Bass
4331 - Yamaha TRB1004J, Trans Black
10307 - Yamaha TRBX304 Bass

5 String Basses

10109 - Cort A5 5 String Bass, Open Pore Natural
12538 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Open Pore Nat.
11014 - Fender Jazz Bass 5 String
13117 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass V Natural
11066 - G&L Tribute L2500 5 String Natural Gloss
9702 - G&L Tribute L2500 5-String In Walnut
8174 - Lodestone Primal Pro 5, Chignal Blue
12294 - Marleaux Consat Custom Bolt On 5 String
12198 - MusicMan Stingray 5 Honeyburst
9002 - Overwater Aspiration Deluxe Bass, Black
9009 - Overwater Contemporary 5-String Bass
10963 - Overwater Inspiration 5, Red Burst
12561 - Peavey Millenium BXP 5-String Bass
10960 - Pedulla Rapture Fretted 5-String Bass
5121 - Rockbass Streamer LX5, Black
11196 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Classic Blk Cherry
11195 - Spector Bass Performer 5 Black SP5BK
12406 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Amber
6448 - Westcoast JB5, Trans Amber
12896 - Yamaha BB1025 5 String Bass Guitar
9351 - Yamaha BB425 5 String Bass Guitar, Black
8999 - Yamaha RBX5A2 5 String Bass, Black
8023 - Yamaha TRB1005J 5 String, Caramel Brown
4889 - Yamaha TRB1005J Bass, Natural
10308 - Yamaha TRBX305 Bass
10310 - Yamaha TRBX505 Bass

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8687 - Breedlove Passport Plus B350/CB4
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5394 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Natural
5392 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Sunburst
6782 - Levin LB100 Bass, Electro 4, Sunburst
12351 - Ortega D Walker White Short Scale
10498 - Ortega D Walker Acoustic Bass, Black
12307 - Tanglewood DB TAB Acoustic Bass
12361 - Tanglewood Odyssey TMO B2
13014 - Tanglewood TWRBE Travel Bass Guitar
12292 - Westfield PJB380 Acoustic Bass Natural

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6445 - Westcoast BG5 Fretless, Natural

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11193 - Ashdown ABM NEO C210 400W 2x10
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8714 - Ashdown After Eight 20 Bass Combo
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8758 - Ashdown Electric Blue EB15 220
8751 - Ashdown Five Fifteen ABM100 Combo
8753 - Ashdown Five Fifteen Mini Rig 100
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8722 - Ashdown Mag C210T 300 Evo III
8720 - Ashdown Mag C210T 300 Bass Combo
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9320 - Ashdown MiBass C110-200
9321 - Ashdown MiBass C115 550 Bass Combo
8750 - Ashdown Perfect Ten 40 Bass Combo
9311 - Ashdown TE12 C115h Bass Combo
9310 - Ashdown TE12 C210h 12 Band Combo
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5062 - Ashdown Tourbus 15 (15W, 1x8)
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8988 - EA Euphonic Audio iAmp 350 Bass Head
12430 - Eden EC10 50 Watts Bass Amp Combo
12432 - Eden EC15 180W Bass Amp Combo
12431 - Eden EC210 2 x 10 Bass Amp Combo
12429 - Eden EC8 20 Watt Bass Combo

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4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
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9471 - Hartke David Ellefson A70 Bass Combo
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9281 - Hartke Hydrive HMH210C Bass Combo
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9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
6238 - Mark Bass CMD103H (400W, 3x10)
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin (300W)
5473 - Mark Bass Micromark (50W, 1x6)
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W, 1x12)
5474 - Mark Bass Mini CMD151P (300W, 1x15W)
5471 - Mark Bass Minimark (250W, 2x6)
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5234 - Orange Crush PiX 25BX (25W, 1x8)
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10265 - Orange Crush Pix CR100BXT
10264 - Orange Terror Bass 500 Bass Amp
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11005 - Peavey Max 110 Bass Amp Combo
5965 - Peavey Max 112 (35W, 1x12)
5964 - Peavey Max 115 (50W, 1x15)
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5064 - Ashdown Little Bastard 30, 30W
8708 - Ashdown Little Bastard 550 Head
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9349 - Hartke HA2500 Bass Head
9027 - Hartke Kilo 1000 Bass Head
12382 - Hartke LH1000 Bass Head
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5245 - Mark Bass Little Mark 800, 800W
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9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
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5243 - Mark Bass SD1200, 1200W
7962 - Markbass TTE500 Randy Jackson
9256 - Markbass Big Bang 500W Bass Head
9250 - Markbass Classic 300 Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
9249 - Markbass L Mark Rocker 500
9255 - Markbass Momark Modular Bass Systems
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
9725 - Markbass TTE800 Randy Jackson
5652 - Marshall MB450H 450W
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6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head
13058 - Orange OB1K Sleeved Bass Head
13057 - Orange OB1KR Rackmounted Bass Head
5242 - Orange TB1000 1000W Terror
5351 - Orange Terror Bass 500 TB500
5957 - Peavey Pro VB3 300W
5960 - Peavey Tour 450, 450W

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8733 - Ashdown 210T Deep Lite Bass Cab
6457 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15)
6456 - Ashdown ABM410H (4x10)
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4392 - Ashdown CL414H Plus Horn (4x10)
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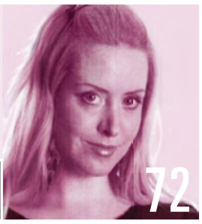
BASS TECHNIQUES

MAKING YOU A BETTER BASS PLAYER

Welcome to our redesigned techniques section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to **Beginner**, **Intermediate** and **Advanced** level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in...

Joel McIver, editor

Ellen O'Reilly is a freelance bassist and vocalist currently studying at ICMP. Ellen has extensive experience in gigging, studio and television work.
www.lowendlady.com



ELLEN O'REILLY BEGINNER'S THEORY 72

Paul Geary attended the Berklee College of Music in Boston and the Musicians' Institute of Technology. He also heads up the Academy Of Contemporary Music's bass school.
www.paulgeary.com

PAUL GEARY BEGINNER'S TECHNIQUES 74

Alex Webster founded the frankly terrifying Cannibal Corpse in 1988 and has guested since then on musically complex projects such as Blotted Science. He is the author of the Extreme Metal Bass instruction book.

ALEX WEBSTER INTERMEDIATE THEORY 76

Rob Statham has amassed over 25 years as a professional freelance bass player. He has played in a wide range of musical settings, including jazz, blues, prog and classical, and he has taught for the past three years at Tech Music School.

ROB STATHAM INTERMEDIATE TECHNIQUES 78

Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Brighton, Franc has worked with artists such as Steve Howe (Yes), Lisa Moorish, and Mike Lindup (Level 42). Franc uses Jeff Chapman basses and Elites strings.
www.francoshea.com

FRANC O'SHEA ADVANCED THEORY 82

Say hello to our new advanced techniques columnist Philip Mann, star of studio and stage. Ready to get those fingers flying? Mann up...

PHILIP MANN ADVANCED TECHNIQUES 84

David Etheridge studied double bass at the Royal College of Music. Since then he's worked with musicians such as Nigel Kennedy and Martin Taylor. David teaches double and electric bass and is the MD of two big bands and a 55-piece jazz orchestra.

DAVID ETHERIDGE UPRIGHT BASS 86

Kev Sanders is a freelance electric and double bassist.As well as numerous BBC radio and television sessions, he's played over 4,000 live gigs. He is the head of Bass Studies at AMS.
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ELLEN O'REILLY

BASS MAESTRO ELLEN IS HERE TO GET YOUR THEORY UP AND RUNNING. THIS MONTH: SCALES!

Last month we looked at the musical alphabet and what these notes looked like on the stave, so in this issue I want to discuss scales. There are many different kinds of scales, and at first they can seem a bit daunting, but look at it like this: scales are simply varying arrangements of the 12 notes of the musical alphabet. Simple, right?

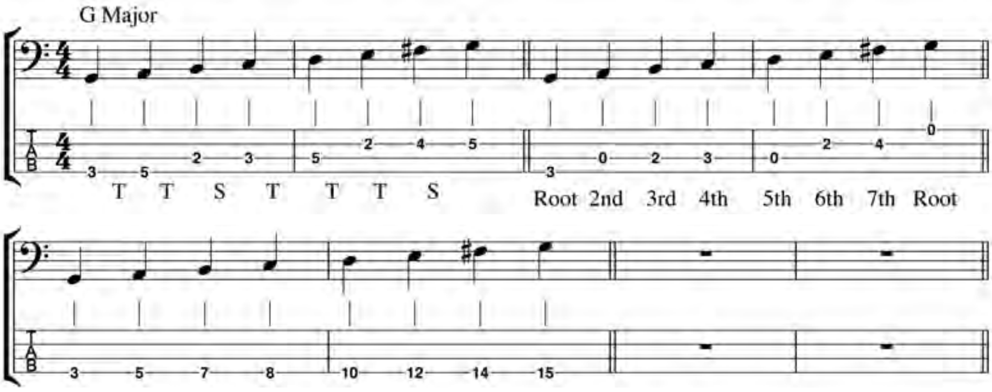
The question I found myself asking when I was younger was, why do we need scales? The answer is that we need them because they help us play the correct notes in a given key. If you don't play the right notes, your bass part will sound wrong.

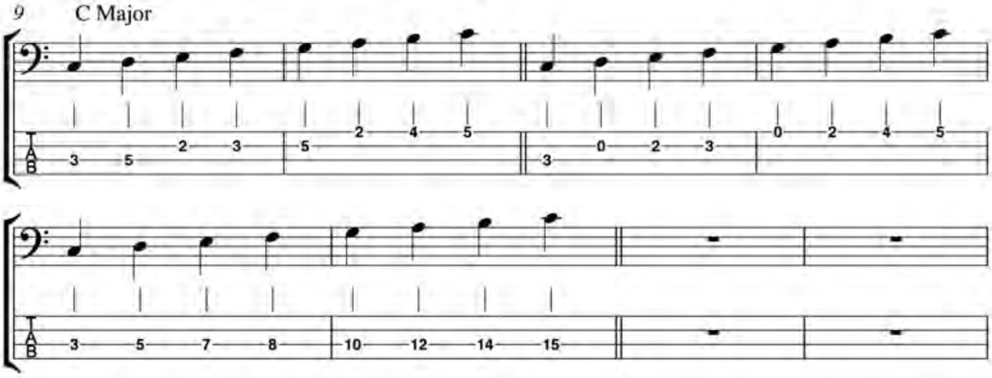
So what key is a song in? Look at the key signature. This tells us what notes – sharps (#) or flats (b) – we can play to sound correct in a particular key. For example, the key of E major has four sharps, so we play these notes: E, F#, G#, A, B, C#, D#, E. These notes make up the major scale. This scale is most important scale you will learn, as it is the basis for so many others – so we'll look at this one first.

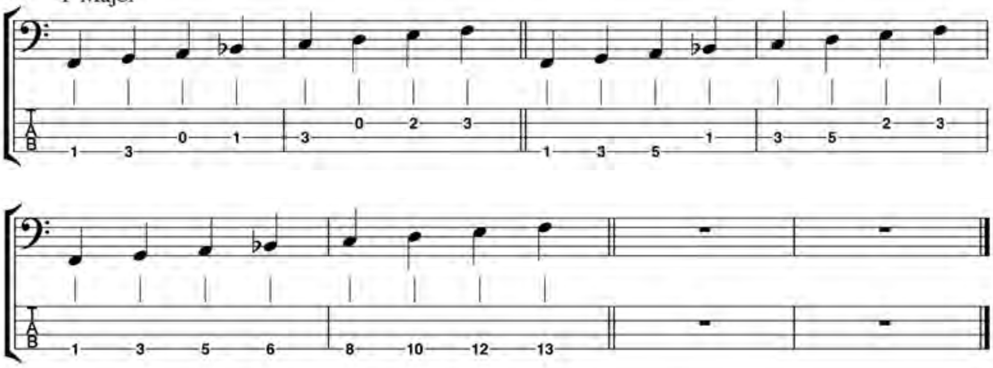
As bass players, we can easily get caught up in the patterns that we can see on our fretboards, which can limit us to only being able to play in a certain position. Instead, it is much better to learn scales as a formula: knowing where all the notes are on your bass will be a huge help here (see last month's column).

Each note in the scale has a name so you know where you are: for example, the starting note at the base of the scale is called the root. Then you have the 2nd (II), 3rd (III), perfect 4th (IV), perfect 5th (V), 6th, 7th and then back to the root at the octave.

Notes are arranged into scales via the formula or arrangement of tones (T) and semitones (S). A tone is the distance between the root note and two frets above it, while a semitone is the distance between the root note and the next fret to it. The formula for the major scale is T, T, S, T, T, T, S. You can apply this formula to any key: for example, G major is G, A, B, C, D, E, F#. The distance between G and A is a tone, the distance between A and B is a tone, the distance between B and C is a semitone – and so on. Follow this pattern from any root note and you'll be playing all the notes for that major key. Try playing this formula up a single string, so you can hear and see the difference between the tones and semitones. Try to memorise the formula for the major scale and use it to play in all 12 keys. Good luck, low-enders!







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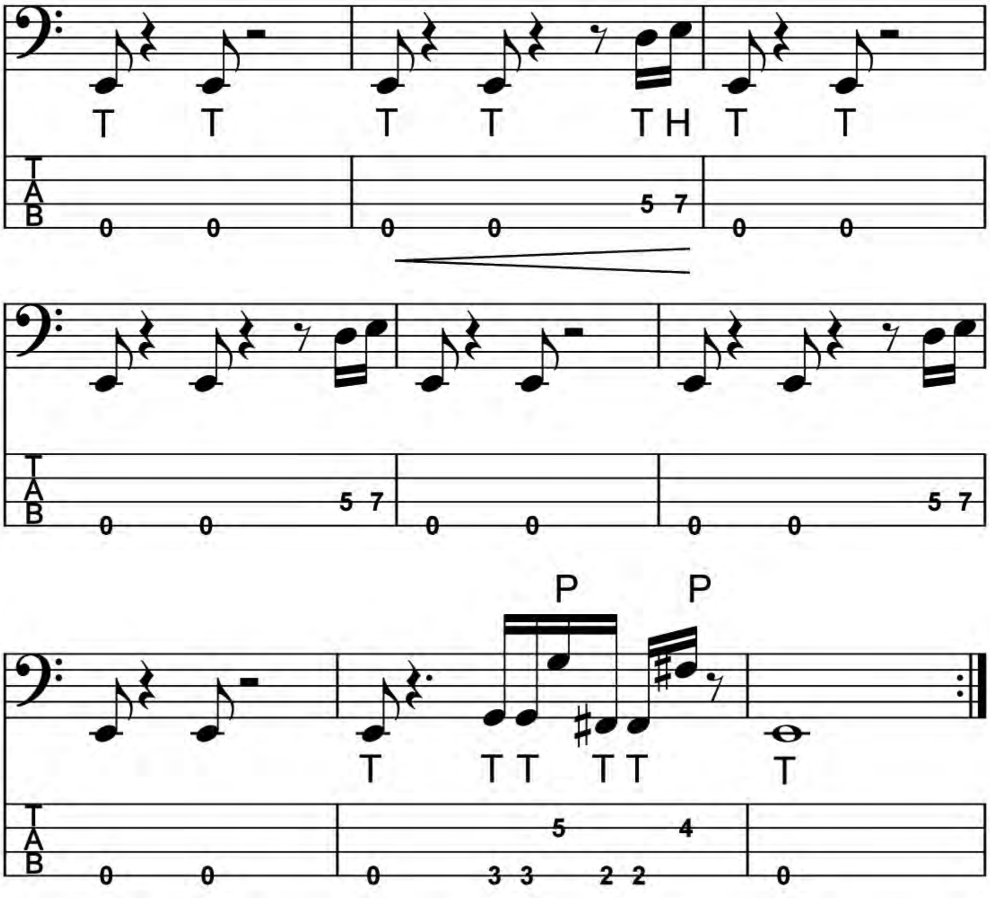
PAUL GEARY

THE GEARYMEISTER TEACHES US HOW TO SLAP WITHIN A RHYTHM. GET THAT THUMB READY!

This month, let's continue to incorporate some of the techniques we have looked at so far in this series of columns and create a slap groove around a basic rhythm chart. The groove has to have a focus and an overall anchor, so the bass-line can sit within the framework of the song. This needs to be played consistently with good time, meter and feel. Any fill used must have a purpose and meaning. They have to sit withi the groove and not detract fron the overall bass-line. Got it? Let's go!

Example 1

This is the basic pulse we need to master. Bar one essentially lays down the framework for each example. Try to set up a kick drum pattern to match the two eighth notes on open E within the first bar. If you don't have a drum program (there are websites and apps that will do this for you), set your metronome to 4/4 and subdivide the bar into eighth notes. This will provide a pulse in order to play the notes correctly and in time. Set your metronome to 85BPM as a starting point, and hammer on from the thumbed D and E (at fifth fret and seventh fret on the A string) every other bar. Hit the D (fifth fret A string) hard to get good attack, this will ensure a strong hammer-on to the E note (seventh fret A string). We then reach the octave fill in bar eight. Make sure you hit the sixteenth notes strongly and with precision. When playing the low G (third fret E string) use the string as a springboard to get a good pluck on the high G (fifth fret D string) and F sharp (fourth fret D string).

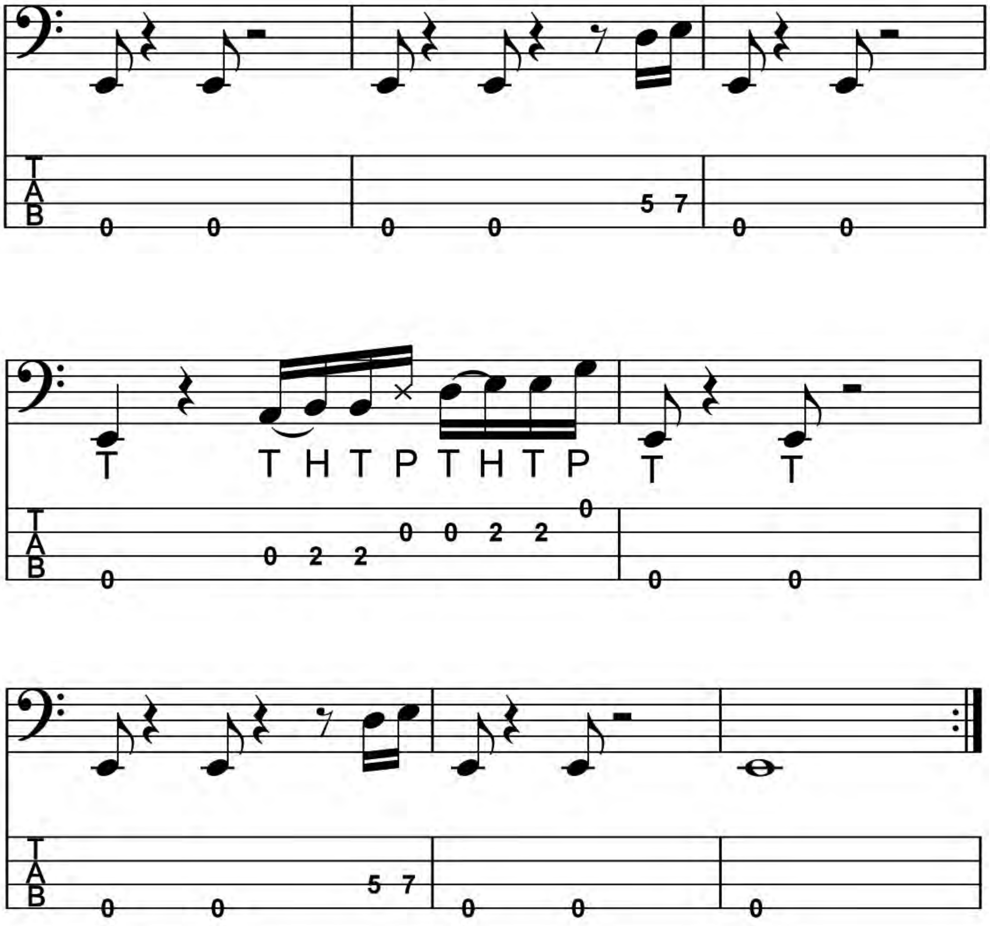


"IT REALLY IS GOOD PRACTICE TO BE ABLE TO WRITE AS WELL AS PLAY DIFFERENT RHYTHMS AND COMBINATIONS OF NOTES"

Extending your tone life

Example 2

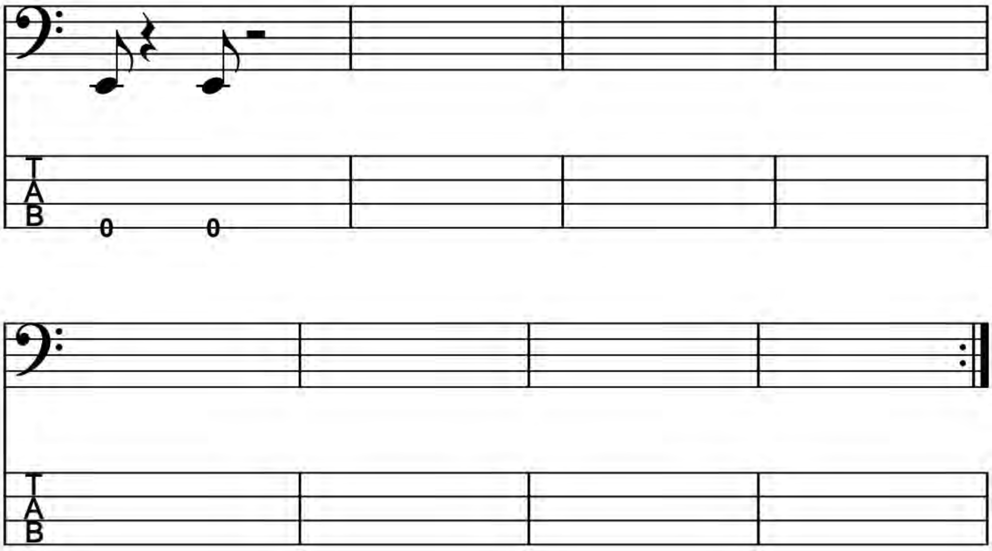
We start this next example with the same pulse. Make sure that each thumbed note is strong and played cleanly with good tone. At bar four we attempt a single string fill, starting on open A. Watch out for the dead note at the end of the first grouping of sixteenths. This is the trigger for the following four sixteenth notes, starting with open D and finishing on a plucked open G. It is vital that you hit the first beat of bar five in time on a thumbed low E, and continue to play the groove as written. The fill is a little different as we break out of the usual octave pattern into more of a linear fill across the neck.



Example 3

Over to you! I've given you the basic pulse, so have a go at writing in some variations on the blank bars. Take a look back at previous issues and have a go. It really is good practice to be able to write as well as play different rhythms and combinations of notes. This will help your overall musicality and understanding of music notation.

See you next month for some more grooving!



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ALEX WEBSTER

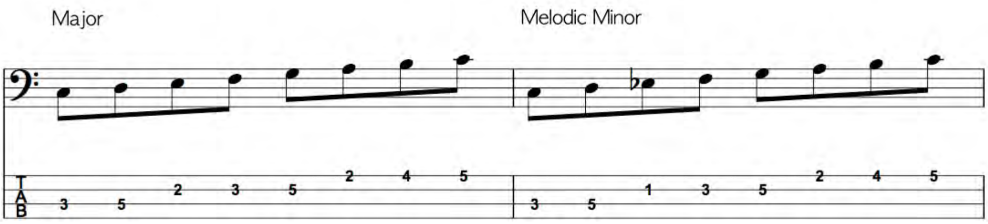
BASS GURU WEBSTER TAKES US INTO THE MELODIC MINOR ZONE

This month, we're going to continue our journey into the world of scales and modes by taking a look at the melodic minor scale. Though it's often associated with jazz and progressive rock, it can be used in almost any kind of music. It's an interesting alternative to the more common tonality of the natural major and minor scales.

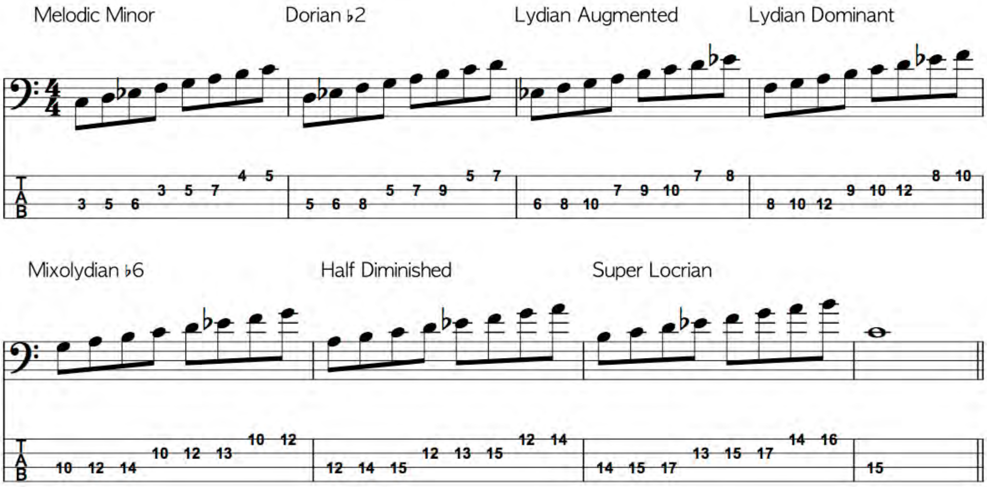
Let's start off by comparing the melodic minor scale to a scale you're already familiar with: the natural major. As you can see in *example one*, to create a melodic minor scale from a major scale you need only lower the third degree by a half step. In the case of C major this would mean lowering E to E flat. At first, glance this might look like a minor change (no pun intended), but it carries significant harmonic weight. Changing even one degree of a scale will always make it sound different: this is especially true when you change the third degree, as this will dictate whether the scale will be major or minor.

In *example two* we'll go through the scale, starting with C melodic minor and working our way through the scale's various modes. As always, each mode is built using the same seven notes as the parent scale, in this case C, D, Eb, F, G, A, and B. The only difference is the point from which you start and stop, so starting on D creates the Dorian b2 mode, starting on E creates the Lydian augmented mode, and so on.

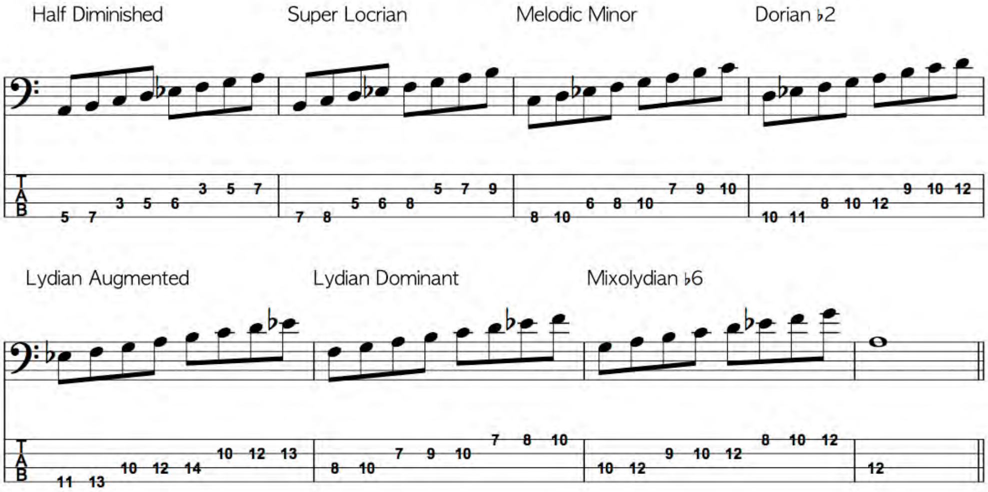
Example 1



Example 2



Example 3



Example three starts the C melodic minor modes from A half diminished. I did this so that you can compare it to working through the modes of A natural minor, which we did last month. You'll see that A half diminished is just A natural minor with a flat fifth. The difference in tonality that this flat fifth creates is certainly noticeable, but to my ear it's not as distinct as the difference that changing the third makes, as discussed above.

To get more enjoyment out of practising scales and modes, I will sometimes sequence or record

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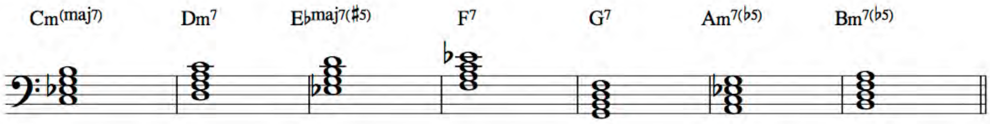
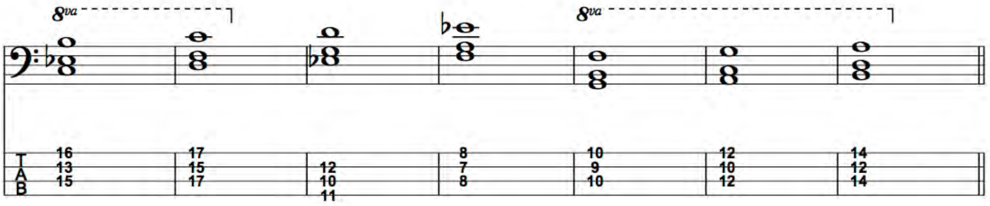
chordal accompaniment to play over. *Example four* shows you the appropriate 7th chords that work with each mode of the C melodic minor scale. If you don't have a sequencer or piano/guitar-playing friend to play the chords with you, you could record or loop the three-note variations of these chords in *example five* on your bass.

This month we've learned that by simply changing one note of the major scale, we can create seven new modes, each with their own unique character. If you're new to all this, you may now be starting to realise just how many possibilities there are: with just a handful of parent scales you'll be able to make dozens of modes and chords. More on this next time, when we take a look at the neo-classical favourite, the harmonic minor.

Example 4



Example 5



ROB STATHAM

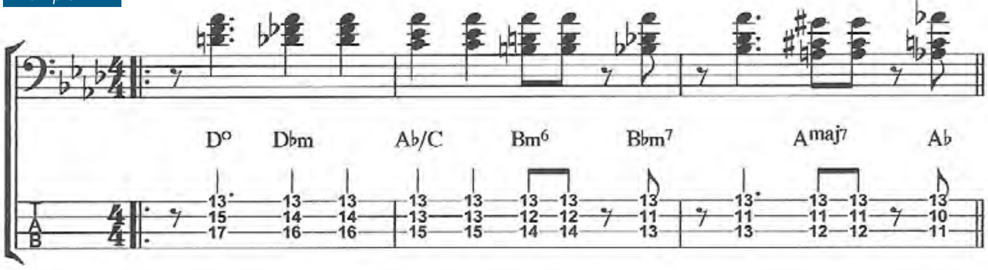
WHAT'S A CHORD MELODY? PROFESSOR STATHAM EXPLAINS

Last month we investigated possible chord voicings on the bass, alongside some of their implications with regard to voice leading. Let's continue with that topic and see how it relates to chord melody – the idea of playing a melody supported by the harmony at the same time. This is not something we're often called upon to do as bassists in a band situation, but it's an interesting area of solo bass performance to investigate. It also provides an insight into harmony that can only reinforce our inevitably 'bottom up' way of thinking about things.

First, a simple question: what is a melody anyway? Sure, it's the tune, the bit we sing – but a melody might be convoluted, enough to suggest the harmony in its contours, or it may be just a couple of notes – even one note. We've all had the experience of a friend telling us about some great new tune they've just heard, and so they sing the melody. This may be a simple two- or three-note motif: without the harmony and rhythm, it means nothing to anyone who hasn't heard it before. Melody is context dependent, taking its meaning from the harmony and rhythm in which it is embedded, with all three elements creating the overall musical effect.

To illustrate this, our first example is a fairly generic idea that might be an intro or coda for a tune, the

Example 1

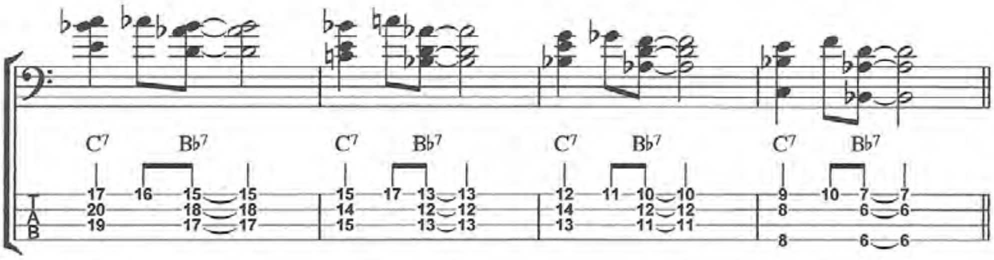


point being that the melody – such as it is – is one note, an Ab, while the harmony moves underneath it. This, together with the rhythm of the melody, creates a 'tune', as we might term it, but the interest really comes from the harmony and rhythm more than from the single-note melody. Incidentally, don't be confused by the notation where the Ab is spelt as a G# for the A major chord in the third bar – it's the same note.

When thinking about playing a chord progression with chord shapes on the bass, it's always worth looking to see if there is a common tone or tones between the chords, as this might suggest a melody which will work with all the chords, will be simple and memorable, and will suggest chord voicings that support it. Our single note idea here could quite easily be embellished to add a few more chord specific tones as well, the pedal tone creating a continuous reference throughout.

It can be quite challenging to come up with interesting chord melody ideas when faced with a simple repeating figure of, say, just two chords – for instance C7 to Bb7 repeating round and round. We might end up just going back and forth using the same chord shape, which would restrict melodic possibilities. However, with a knowledge of useful chord shapes and voice-leading options, we can generate many variations which will suggest different melodic ideas, enabling us to think about the direction of the melody, rather than the melody being at the mercy of our chord shape limitations. The next two examples show that it is possible to create chord melody ideas moving in opposing directions on the two chords mentioned above, with a half bar of each repeating.

Example 2



The first (*example two*) is a melody moving in a downward direction, the challenge being to find voicings for each chord that support this. As you can see, we start with the tonic as the melody note for each chord, then the seventh, followed by the fifth, and concluding with the third, the melody being a simple embellishment on these tones. The tab will help you find these shapes, but you may recognise them as they are all voicings for dominant 7 chords, which we've looked at before. You can see here how they can be used together to support a melody line that doesn't move in the same direction as the harmony.

The next example demonstrates the same concept, but in an opposite fashion – creating a melody on the same chord sequence that moves in an upward direction. I have started with the same chord voicing for the initial C7 as in the previous example, but an octave lower. This time the melody rises from that note rather than descending from it an octave above. Again, the chord voicings support this melodic direction, finishing on a voicing for a Bb9 chord, the note C being where we began our descending idea. By using these different voicings in different ways it will be possible to support a number of variations with a chord melody approach. Use these two ideas as a starting point for your own exploration, combining different voicings in ways that suggest other melodic possibilities.

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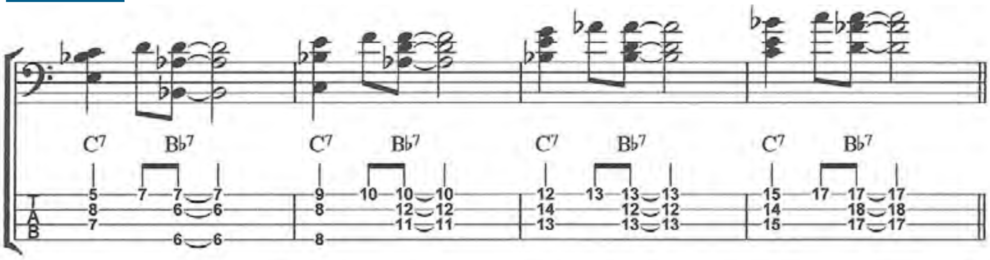
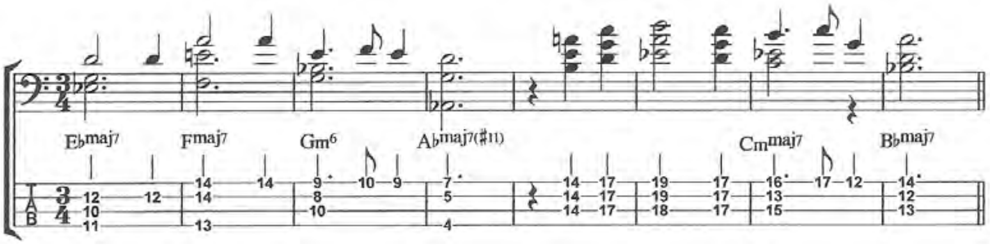
Example 3



Example 4



Our final example is an exercise in reharmonisation – the notion of taking a tune and using chords other than the normal changes to harmonise it. This can be fun to experiment with when trying to come up with chord melody ideas. The exercise brings us back to the question of what is a melody, and how is it perceived. Certainly, when reharmonising a tune it is possible to greatly change the character of the melody, a simple example being a tune that doesn't use the third of the chord and harmonising it as either major or minor. The melody wouldn't change, but its character would.

The tune I have used in this last example is the first eight bars of a traditional English folk song, which I'm sure you'll know, but I'll let you discover its identity for yourself as you play it. In fact, the reharmonisation doesn't render it that unfamiliar, but it's certainly different. There may be some less familiar chord shapes here: for instance, the fourth bar is a way of playing a major seven sharp 11 chord, omitting the third. I haven't given chord names to the voicings in the fifth and sixth bar, but they are essentially patterns of fourths used to support the melody, an example of quartal harmony – fourths imparting a particular sound. The chord in the seventh bar is a minor major seven, that is, a minor triad with a major seventh: in this case, a B natural on a C minor major chord. It's a very evocative sound. I'm sure you'll recognise the song, but reharmonising tunes that we know can be an enjoyable and illuminating exercise. It may suggest possibilities for chord melody we wouldn't otherwise consider.

As you can see, expanding our knowledge of chord shapes on the bass provides us with myriad ways to combine these different possibilities. They lead us to conceive of many voice leading options, which, in turn, can suggest many possibilities for chord melody ideas. These are interesting areas to explore, enhancing our solo bass range and providing many more options for chordal accompaniment. They also teach us a great deal about the relationship between harmony and melody, and provide us with a fresh perspective on these issues. That can only enhance our fundamental role as bassists.

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FRANC O'SHEA

THIS MONTH FRANC DELVES DEEPER INTO SCALE SUBSTITUTIONS. DIVE IN!

In this month's column I will be continuing my series on soloing by looking at substitute scales that can be used on a standard jazz Imaj7/VI7/IImin7/V7 sequence. Last month, I looked at some common scales that work with this progression, but there are many others that will work, some of which we will be exploring this month.

The table in *example one* shows the scales that we used last month in relation to the Imaj7/VI7/IImin7/V7 sequence, as the header of each column. Each column then shows a series of substitute chords and scales that will work with the original sequence. The substitutions in the first and third columns are fairly straightforward as they are relative to the relevant chords in the original progression. For example, the first column's header states that the chord is Imaj7. Using the key of C major as an example, this would be a Cmaj7 chord whose notes are C, E, G and B. Below the header in the same column, a IIImin7 is designated as a substitution. In the key of C this would be an Emin7 chord whose notes are E, G, B and D. The Emin7 works as a substitution for the Cmaj7 as they have three notes in common. Both chords contain the notes E, G and B.

This same principle applies to the scales that work with these chords. The C major scale, which is also known as the Ionian mode, contains the notes of C, D, E, F, G, A and B, and since the chord of Cmaj7 is built in the tertiary system, you could say that its notes are taken as every other note, i.e. in thirds, from the Ionian scale. This same principle, however, also works with the Lydian mode, which is also sometimes used on chord Imaj7. Likewise, the notes of an Emin7 can be taken from the Phrygian mode, which is the third mode of the key. The Aeolian mode is also shown since it is built on the third degree of the Lydian just as the Phrygian is built on the third of the Ionian. These same relative principles are applied to the IImin7/Dorian chord/mode, which appears in the third column, and its substitution, IVmaj7/Lydian, which appears below it.

The chords that appear in the second and fourth columns, however, are of a different nature. Whereas the chords in the first and third columns provide harmonic resolution, the dominant chords in columns two and four provide the tension that highlights this resolution. These dominant chords have more scope in terms of what substitutions will work with them.

Example 1

IΔ7 (Ionian/Lydian)	VI7 (Phrygian Dominant)	II-7 (Dorian)	V7 (Mixolydian ♭2)
III-7 (Phrygian/Aeolian)	♭VII07 = VI7 (Phrygian ♭4/Altered)	IVΔ7 (Lydian)	♭VI07 = V7 (Lydian Dominant/Altered)
	#I07 = I7 (Mixolydian ♭2/Lydian Dominant)		VII07 = ♭VII7 (Lydian Dominant/ Symmetrical Diminished)
	III07 = ♭III7 (Lydian Dominant/Altered)		II07 = ♭II7 (Lydian Dominant/Altered)
	V07 = ♭V7 (Lydian Dominant/Altered)		IV07 = III7 (Phrygian Dominant/ Phrygian ♭4/Altered)

Example 2

Scale/mode	Formula
Lydian Dominant	1, 2, 3, #4, 5, 6, ♭7
Mixolydian ♭2	1, ♭2, 3, 4, 5, 6, ♭7
Phrygian Dominant	1, ♭2, 3, 4, 5, ♭6, ♭7
Phrygian ♭4	1, ♭2, ♭3, ♭4(=3), 5, ♭6, ♭7
Altered	1, ♭2, ♭3, ♭4, ♭5, ♭6, ♭7 or 1, ♭9, #9, 3, ♭5, #5, ♭7
Symmetrical Diminished	1, ♭2, #2, 3, #4, 5, 6, ♭7

First off, we see the diminished 7th substitutions that I demonstrated in my column in *BGM 103*. These diminished 7th substitutions can easily be turned into a series of dominant 7th chords that are all a minor third apart, simply by lowering the roots. I covered this principle in depth back in *BGM 53* and *54*. The dominant 7th chord in the key of C is G7. Its notes are G, B, D and F. If we add its flatted ninth to it, i.e. an Ab, we end up with a G7b9 chord. The flatted ninth adds even more tension to the G7 chord in a V7 to Imaj7 progression, also known as a perfect cadence, since the Ab is a semitone away from the note G, which is the fifth of Cmaj7. Quite simply, the note Ab of the G7b9 resolves down a semitone to land on the fifth of Cmaj7, creating tension and subsequent release.

If we drop the root note from the G7b9 chord, the notes that remain are B, D, F and Ab. This is a Bdim7 chord, but – since diminished 7th chords are completely symmetrical, as each note is a minor third away from the next, and this cycle is completed once the octave is reached after a series of four minor thirds – the chords of Bdim7, Ddim7, Fdim7 and Abdim7 are essentially the same chord.

This series of related diminished 7th chords is highlighted in both columns two and four, where they are shown as substitutions for chords VI7 and V7 respectively. If you lower the root note of any diminished 7th chord by a semitone it will become a dominant 7th chord. For example, if you have an Abdim7 chord, Ab (G#), B, D and F, and lower its root note by a semitone, it will become a G7 chord, G, B, D and F. Since this principle works for any diminished 7th chord, we can create a series of dominant 7th chords that create tension and work as substitutions derived from the diminished

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7th substitutions shown in the second and fourth columns. Scales/modes that work with these substitutions are shown in brackets.

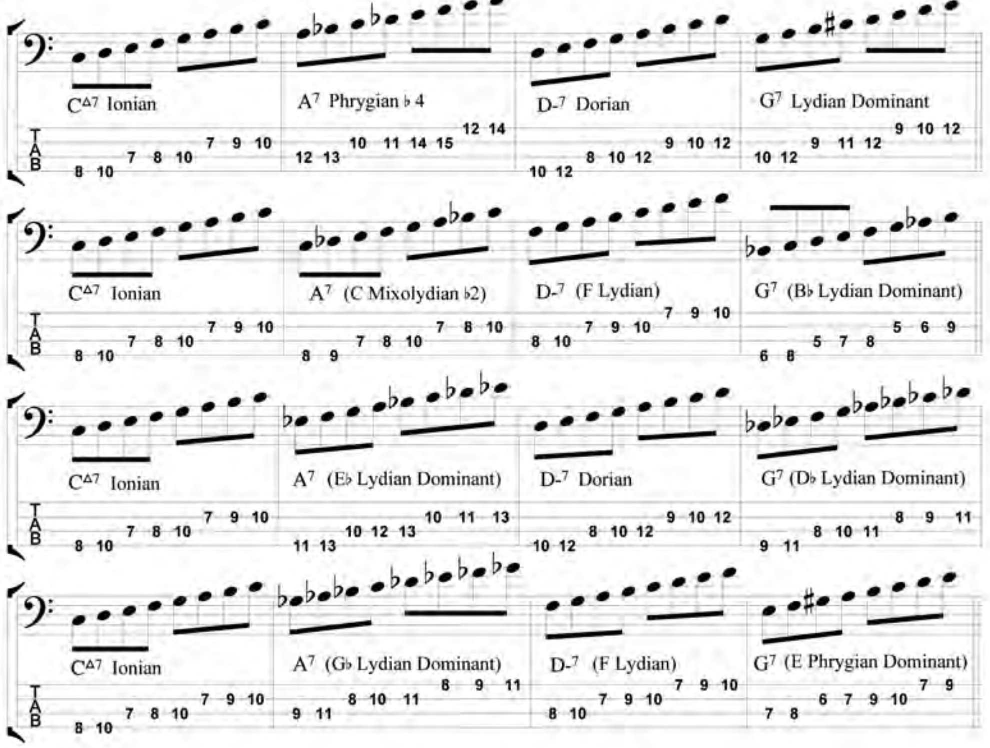
The interval formulas for these scales are provided in *example two*: an octatonic (eight note) symmetrical diminished scale is shown as well. You will note that two formulas are provided for the altered scale. The first is its normal interval formula, and the second demonstrates how it is used to create dominant 7th and altered chords in a jazz context. For example, its diminished fourth interval is the enharmonic equivalent of a major third and is used as such when creating chords in this jazz context.

Examples three and *four* demonstrate how these scales can be used by systematically running through many of the options as shown in the table in example one. As usual, tab is given for left-hand fingering but feel free to try out alternative fingering and different octaves. Where the scale's root note doesn't start from the same root note as the chord, the scale is shown in brackets with the alternative root. To hear how the substitute scales work, try playing them over the basic Imaj7/VI7/IImin7/V7 without substituting the chords.

Playing through these exercises will help open your ear to the many possibilities for playing over these types of changes. Next month we will be looking at some melodic devices that can help you to develop a whole plethora of ideas in a soloing context.

Until then…

Example 3



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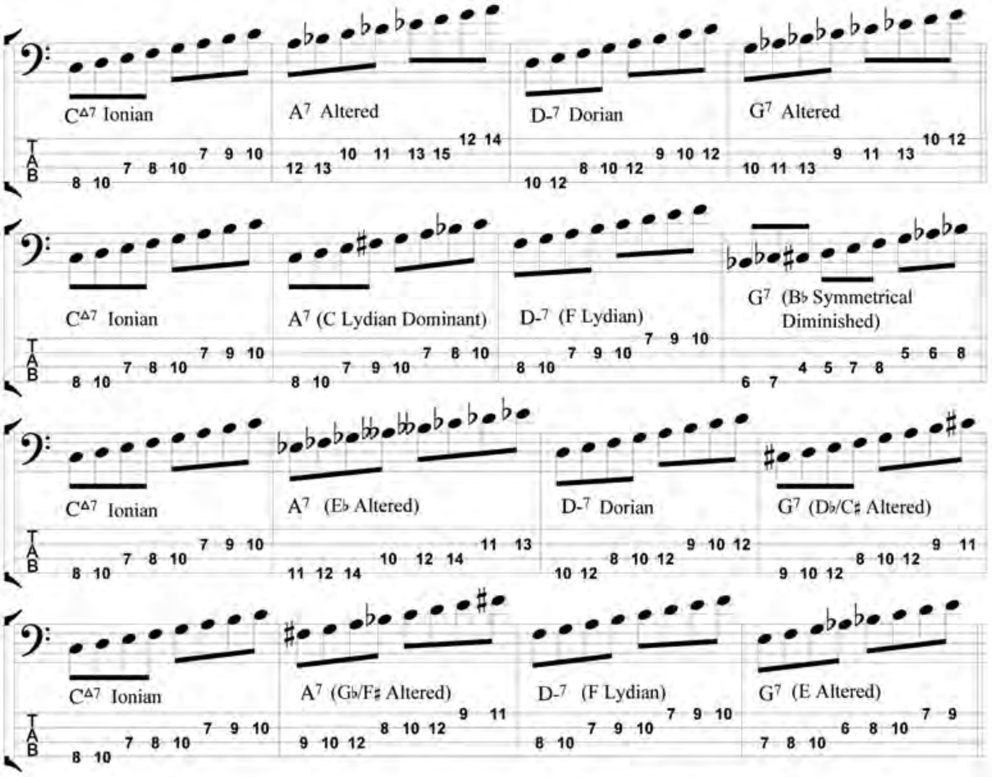

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PHIL MANN

OUR MANN GETS INTO TRIAD FAMILIES. NO, NOT THE FAR EASTERN MAFIA . . .

Greetings once again, chaps and chapesses of *BGM*. Hopefully you're ready for this month's instalment of advanced techniques, as it's time to start raising the bar. Exciting, huh? I know, you nearly dropped your bass with the anticipation.

Right then, looking back over the last couple of months, we've investigated a number of disciplines that have allowed you to develop a functional knowledge and ability in this form of extended technique. Most importantly, though, you should all be well on the way to being able to apply this set of skills to any performance environment. Knowledge is not ability, so please don't confuse the two: ability is the application of knowledge, and you get that from practice and use.

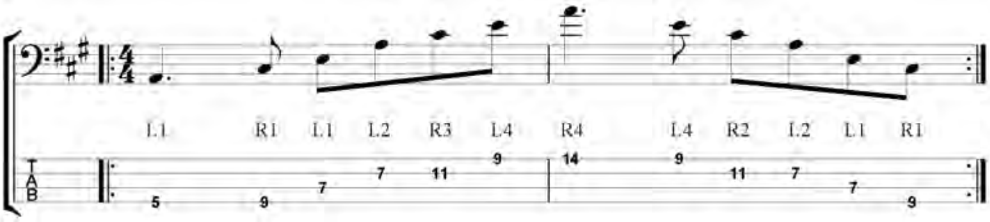
In the last issue, we initiated a number of melodic phrases to perform over some pretty conventional chord progressions. A major I-VImin-V7-I was used, and then, as ever, we introduced a new element to try and spice things up a little. Last month's was secondary dominants.

I'd like to spend a little time analysing triad families further in an attempt to develop our understanding of their vocabulary over two octaves. Triads can essentially be split into two family types, consonant and dissonant. In brief, the consonant triads (major and minor) have no real desire to resolve to another chord: they produce minimal tension, so in essence they're happy to stay where they are and don't seek resolution. Dissonant triads (augmented and diminished), however, are chords that create a degree of tension: this encourages them to move and seek resolution. Today we'll analyse the major and minor families, and next month we'll discover what gems augmented and diminished have in store for us.

In root position, triads are constructed by stacking intervals of thirds: a minor third (three semitones) on top of a major third (four semitones) produces a major triad. However, as we extend this information over two octaves, we come into contact with another interval – the one created when a fifth precedes the root (now an octave higher) producing a perfect fourth. The following examples use these fingering abbreviations: L (left hand), R (right hand), 1 (index finger), 2 (middle finger), 3 (ring finger), and 4 (little finger). Work through the examples, transposing all of the information into all 12 keys.

Example 1

Major triad studies:



Example 2

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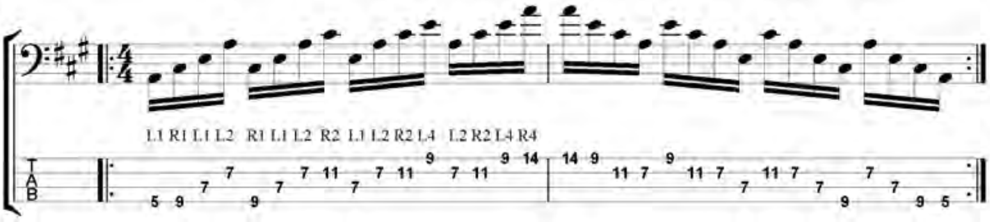
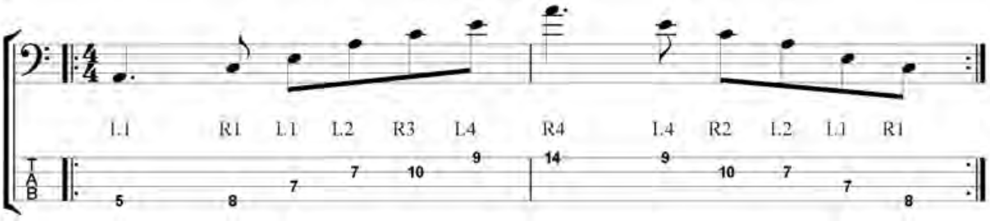


Minor triads are produced by once again stacking two intervals of thirds on top of one another; this time, however, they are the opposite way around to the major. As before, we still come in contact with a perfect fourth as we ascend to the root from the fifth. Examine the following exercises and then transpose the information into all 12 keys.

Example 3

Minor triad studies:



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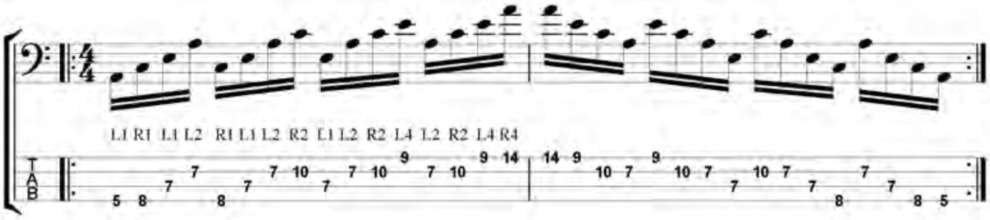
Example 4

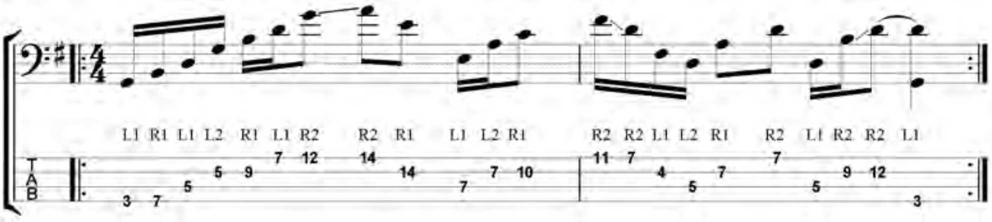
Minor triad studies:



As always, try and apply all the principles studied today in your own performance environments. This month's final example is constructed from a I-IImin-V7-I chord progression: analyse the melodic information and identify the intervals used before attempting to play it. Until next time!

Example 5

I-IImin-V7-I:



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DAVID ETHERIDGE

THESE BASSES ARE MADE FOR WALKING, SAYS OUR MAN ETHERIDGE

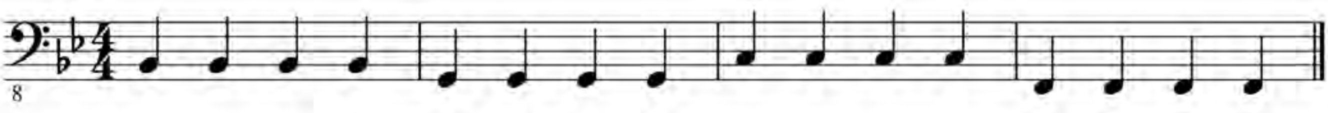
One of the trademarks of the upright bassist is the ability to make your bass-lines 'walk'. What does this mean, exactly? In effect, the bass-line will have musical direction and purpose and follow the chord structure in a logical way, rather than just being four in a bar of 'nothing' Believe it or not, there are guys out there plunking away with little idea of what they're doing.

So how do we go about it? I'll explore some ideas over the next few issues, but let's start with the basics: follow the chords. Let's take as an example a simple four-bar progression that you might find in any jazz standard (and for that matter a few pop tunes as well): that old standby I-VI-II-V progression. In the key of Bb, this would be Bb, Gm, Cm, F, and the basic approach is shown in *example one*.

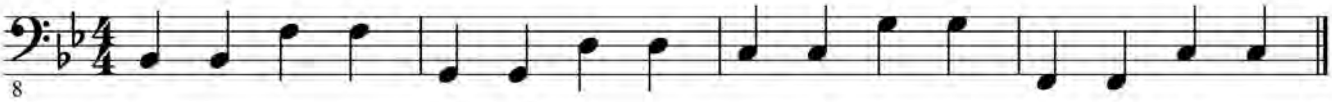
Now, while this is correct harmonically, it sure is dull, so we need to rev it up a bit and make it more interesting. There are several ways of doing this: harmony, chord notes (arpeggios) or scales (moving from one chord to another in steps), chromatic notes between chord tones or scale notes, and any combination thereof. To start off with, we can play the root and fifth of each chord and things get a little more interesting, as in *example two*. However, if we add the notes of each chord, things start to get a lot more interesting: see *example three*. Here we're underlining the chord structure and showing exactly what the tones are: this sort of bass-line can be invaluable when working in a trio under (say) a guitar solo to underpin the harmony.

We've only just started developing this line of musical thought. We can add the 7th of each chord where needed, making Bb, Gm7, Cm7, F7, and the possibilities extend again, as in *example four*. It's still a bit clunky as regards direction between chords. We can improve on this by moving the arpeggios under each chord in different directions, so that we get an easier transition between bars. The distance between notes is smaller, giving a smoother effect, as in *example five*.

Example 1



Example 2



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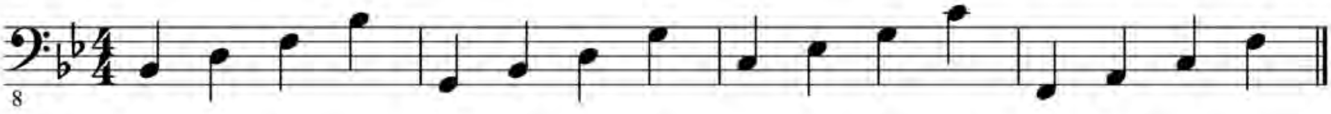

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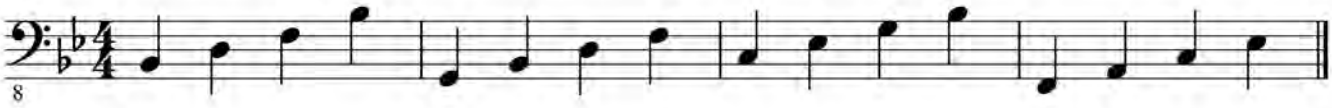

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Example 5

Example 6

Use harmony, arpeggios and scales to liven up basic chord structure

Approach your playing logically to make your bass-lines 'walk'

A variation of this approach is shown in *example six*. You can have tremendous fun trying out all the permutations of this approach, and we've only covered the chord tone approach to this simple four-bar progression.

The sky really is the limit when experimenting with walking bass-lines. One important thing to remember to try out when doing this is if you're playing a standard tune, always try to play a different bass-line each time that you go around the chord sequence. It gives your ears and brain a good workout by exploring all the different possibilities in a chart, expanding your harmonic sense and stopping you from getting complacent or even plain bored!

Next month, we'll look at the scalic approach to walking your bass...

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KEVIN SANDERS

COLONEL SANDERS SALUTES THE THUMB OF DOOM – LES CLAYPOOL OF PRIMUS

Back in the 90s, Primus were one of the hottest bands around. Their energetic mix of funk, metal and just about anything else they could think of – including a healthy dose of the avant-garde – made them a big hit, especially with us musos. A big part of their success was down to frontman and bass player Les Claypool. As well as his semi-spoken lyrics, delivered in a distinctive, nasal drawl, crazy dancing and wry lyrics, his bass playing was and still is astonishing.

Claypool has been a busy guy outside Primus too. You may know that he wrote and performed the *South Park* theme tune, and that he has produced and acted in movies, founded the Purple Pachyderm vineyard and even written a novel. Listen to his recordings and read his interviews, and you'll start to get an idea of just what a creative force he really is.

As important as all this extra-curricular stuff is, we're here to check out his bass playing.

APP EXTRA
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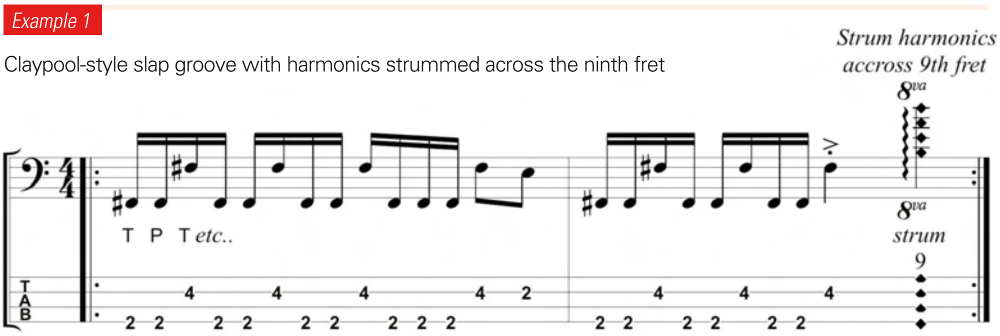
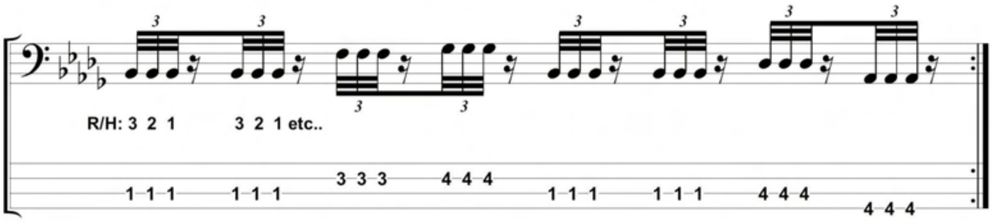
Example 1

Claypool-style slap groove with harmonics strummed across the ninth fret



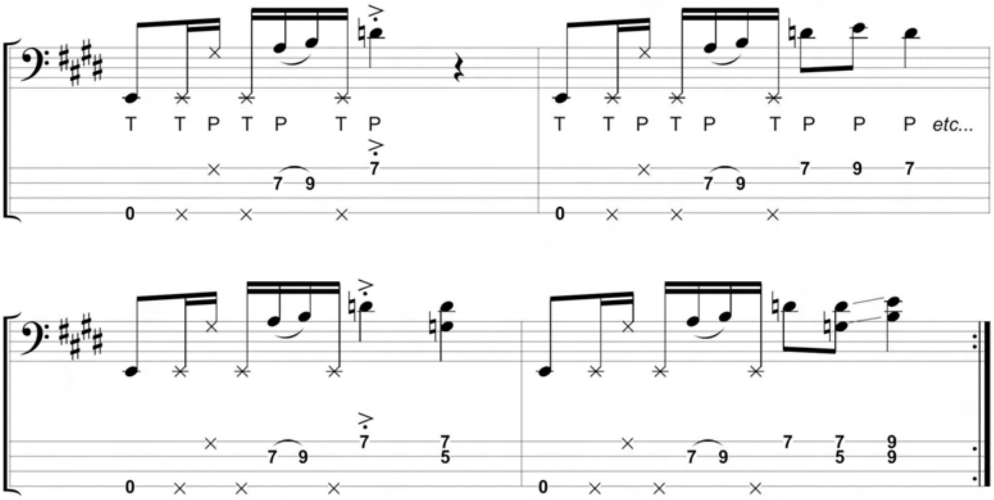
Example 2

Demi-semiquaver (32nd note) triplet groove, similar to the bass part on 'The Toys Go Winding Down'



Example 3

Slap groove similar to the one Claypool uses on 'The Awakening'



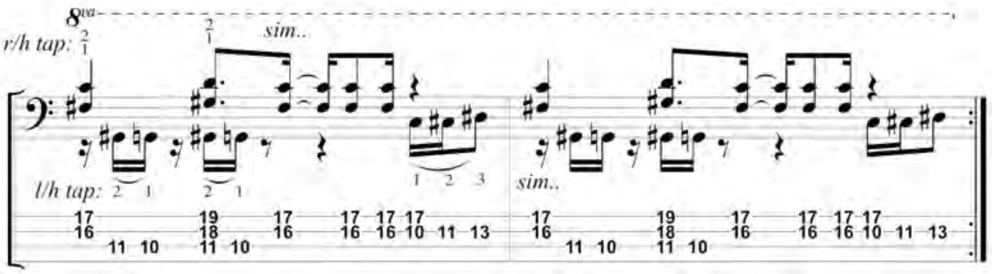
There's no denying that Claypool has a distinct sound and style, but he uses a range of techniques including slapping, tapping and strumming to create a rhythmic backdrop to his compositions. It's incredibly effective, so let's take a closer look.

STYLE

Claypool has a whole range of techniques at his fingertips, but the two that he uses to best effect are slapping and right hand tapping. Just watch him play the intro to 'Jerry Was A Race Car Driver', which will give you a pretty good overview of what his bass playing is all about. He wears the bass pretty low but has a very 'correct' slap technique, striking the strings over the end of the fretboard and holding the bass very much as Marcus Miller does. This enables him to slap hard and accurately. For the most part his left hand is fairly well-behaved too, although he'll regularly use his left-hand thumb to fret notes on the E string.

Example 4

Tapped groove in the style of 'Jerry Was A Racecar Driver'



GEAR

For years, Claypool was probably the best-known endorsee of Carl Thompson basses, using a six-string fretless and a fretted and fretless four. Other basses he uses regularly include an aluminium-necked Kramer eight-string and various old Fender Jazz basses. Special mention must also go to the Bass Banjo and the 'Whamola', the latter being a one-string bass instrument that he plays by hitting the string with a drumstick. Lately, however, he has developed his own Pachyderm bass, although there is no sign of a commercial version yet.

Although Claypool has enthusiastically endorsed new technologies from the start, he also enjoys the traditional sound of tube amps. For some time now his main rig has consisted of an SVT-3PRO head, with two SVT-PR410H cabs. Formerly with Primus he used a Mesa Bass 400+ rig, occasionally augmented with SWR cabs. Effects-wise, he uses pedals and effects both vintage and modern, with a Line 6 DL4 delay and DM4 distortion, a Boomerang Phrase sampler and various vintage Electro Harmonix pedals on stage with him. His DI is via an MXR M-80 Bass DI.

Claypool's acoustic project Duo De Twang has a new album of Primus songs and covers out now

ESSENTIAL TRACKS

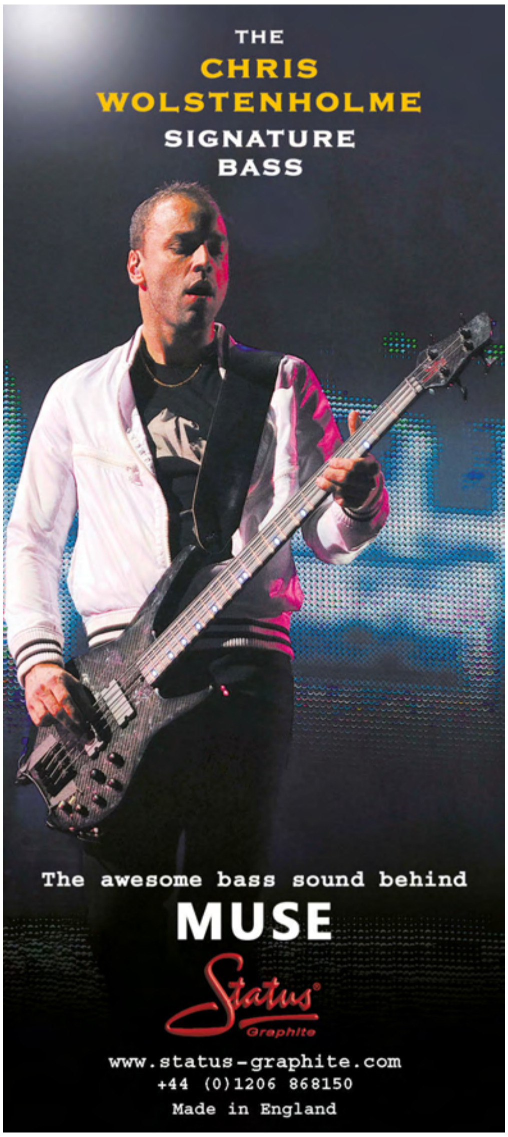
'Jerry Was A Race Car Driver', Primus, *Sailing The Seas Of Cheese*
Claypool's bass provides a discordant, tapped rhythmic backbone to this song. Drums keep everything solid while the guitar and Claypool's distinctive nasal twang provide the melody.

'Tommy The Cat', Primus, *Sailing The Seas Of Cheese*
One of the fans' favourite Primus tracks – Claypool at his most, um, creative…

'The Awakening', Les Claypool And The Holy Mackerel, *Highball With The Devil*
Great slap playing on this track from Claypool's first solo album, on which he played the majority of the instruments as well as taking vocals, production and artwork.

'The Toys Go Winding Down', Primus, *Frizzle Fry*
The verse has a simple four-note repeated bass-line, but each note is played as a group of three super-fast demisemiquavers. Great reggae feel in the bridge with bowed double bass holding down the low end.

'Shake Hands With Beef', Primus, *Brown Album*
A Primus single from 1997, with Claypool laying down a heavy slap groove on the E string: the video was produced and directed by Claypool too.



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